

NARRATIVES OF WORKING WITHIN A
COMPLEX ORGANISATION:
ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF CULTURAL
COMPETENCE

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This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful mother,

Margaret Hailes Lindner

Abstract

The aim of this research was to shed light on the multiple social realities within an organisation and provide perspectives on how individuals made sense of the social world, which enabled them to participate in these social realities. As Smircich (1983) explained, culture is something that an organisation is, rather than has. As such, the literature considered ways of assisting individuals to survive and thrive within complex social realities and the personal costs associated with participating in them. The literature was used to demonstrate how my view changed from understanding organisations as beings to considering them as subjective cultures.

I based this research on an interpretative phenomenology. My views were influenced by my desire to explore and interpret the experiences of individuals, who were the organisation's directors. Ethnography enabled me to take into account the knowledge shown in everyday social interactions in the workplace. Multiple perspectives and influences, which shaped this social world, were illuminated by bringing to the surface individual experiences and perceptions. These were achieved by gathering responses to a questionnaire; transcripts of interviews with the eleven directors; four pilot interviews with employees, who were not directors; pre and post interview sheets; and my reflective diary. The diary provided a transparent account of the research process and included an acknowledgment of any potential bias.

This research relied heavily on the views expressed by the eleven directors in their interviews and my own views. Consequently, I wrote this thesis in the first person whenever possible. I chose a theatrical method, aligned to the work of Goffman (1959), to present this research; using acts and scenes to represent the main formal and informal cultural clues, which emerged. I presented Burke's dramatism model (1945, 1969) of human behaviour as a means of understanding the cultural clues, which were revealed.

The findings contribute to an understanding of organisational life and are relevant for those, who want to understand the dynamics of human groups, which, ultimately, may lead to improving our lives in this world. By acknowledging the existence of the cultural scenario and by revealing the characteristics of those, who blunder and those, who exploit, this research demonstrates that individuals have to be encouraged to see the cognitive and visible aspects of the culture, which exist within the structures and processes, the roles and the knowledge and communication, which exist within organisations.

We can comprehend this world from many viewpoints if we only take the time to look.

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Glossary and working definitions

Cultural toolkit

These are considered to be the social processes and structures, required by individuals, so that they can interact in fulfilling their formal role, find out what is going on, and identify opportunities. The repertoire enables individuals to be flexible to survive. The toolkit enables them to see, hear, discover, interpret, and reflect and is gained through experience, observation and interaction to uncover cultural clues namely the information relating to the underlying motives, which guide people's action. These are demonstrated during the reality construction process, which emerges, when required, to solve problems by focusing on shared values, beliefs and meanings. Considering organisations as cultures provides a focus on the patterns by looking at the cognitive systems, which help individuals to cope, and explaining how people think, reason, and make decisions. Therefore, some individuals develop cultural competence, which comprises the skills, knowledge, capacity, behaviours and language required to exercise social judgement. They have an empathy with the culture and possess a repertoire of communicative behavioural skills to 'behave appropriately' within it. It is the know-how and capability to adapt and survive.

Departure Lounge

This is specifically related to the context of this research. All director level employees within this research were based in an open plan office on the top floor of the main headquarters building. As time passed and changes became more prevalent, people, jokingly, referred to this space as 'the departure lounge'. It was likened to an airport departure lounge with many directors leaving for new locations, some unknown and seemingly unexpected.

Formal and informal cultural clues

These terms were used to describe the fragments of culture, which revealed the reality construction process. These fragments enabled individuals to participate within the social reality of the organisation. The formal clues were the visible, explicit elements of the organisation, whilst the informal clues were the tacit elements of the organisation. It would have been impossible to know or understand the dynamics within the organisation without considering these formal and informal clues (Blau and Scott, 1962).

Interpretive Phenomenology

This work considers human beings to be interpretative and capable of finding significance in their own lives. Individuals cannot remove themselves from various contexts; this influences their choices and gives meaning to their experiences. Therefore, I gathered through inductive methods detailed information about perceptions and represented them from the perspectives of those involved.

Organisation

Definitions of organisation arise from social phenomenon, which change with the context and knowledge of an organisation, which resides with individuals within it. Meanings are constructed subjectively and are experienced by more than one person (Latour, 1986). Culture is, therefore, a root metaphor for organisations. It is viewed as something that an organisation is, rather than has (Smircich, 1983). They are cultures with social properties, which are the outcomes of interactions between individuals rather than being separate from those involved in its construction. Viewing organisations as cultures enables us to see what is not seen easily; this is known as the cultural scenario (Kostera, 2006:38).

Presentation of self

Goffman was a major influence in this research. In order to shed light upon my roles within it, it is useful to consider what Goffman (1959) described as the 'Presentation of Self'. These are the methodical as well as unintentional practices of presenting or displaying 'oneself' in ways, which create a particular definition of the situation. Goffman discussed the notions of 'on stage' and 'off stage' and considered the roles, which people play. In order to best provide a description of my roles, it is helpful to consider them, theatrically, in terms of:

- **On stage – as an employee and as a researcher.** I was aware always of the symbolic impact on my behaviour. This was demonstrated in my role as an employee where I changed my accent to ensure that I sounded more professional and could be understood easily. Also, this was demonstrated during the research process when I dressed in my usual work clothes so as not to look different and, therefore, create a barrier to discussion. Having a cup of tea was a symbol of a relaxed interaction, albeit in a formal setting. During the conversations, I used shared language as a means of reassuring my colleagues that we shared common ground and I could be trusted.
- **Directing and producing – as an employee and as a researcher.** In these roles, I found out what was going on, constructed stories with others, and pulled the stories together in a revealing way.
- **Backstage – When I let my guard down and acted as myself.** My reflective diary was the only place where I could 'let go' and be myself without fear of being judged or making mistakes.

I regarded myself as the 'central instrument' within the research; this was essential in revealing the richness of different perspectives. My choice of language throughout was particularly revealing, writing in the first person as much as possible, and demonstrating how my 'position' as the researcher might have shaped the research process. Also, I was able to discuss how aspects of personality, tone of voice, class, gender and clothing shaped the research (Yanow and Schwartz, 2006).

Social actors

After a lot of deliberation regarding how to refer to the individuals, who participated in this research, and considering terms such as interviewees and participants, I decided that social actor was the most appropriate term. Park (1950) explained that the first meaning of the word 'person' is mask and that individuals are always more or less consciously playing multiple roles. These roles were not fixed as Czarniawska-Joerges, (1992:25) explained, '*every person who undertakes to play one of those roles plays it anew tentatively*'. Therefore, throughout this work, people are referred to either as social actors or, simply, as individuals.

Abbreviations

A large volume of text has been provided from the social actors own words – theirs and mine to create the production. The referencing system is shown below:

PIL: line numbers	Text is from a pilot interview. The name of the social actor is provided in bold prior to the reference.
REF: line number	Text is from my reflective diary.
INT: line numbers	Text is from the director social actors interviews. The name of the social actor is provided in bold prior to the reference.

Chapter One: Introduction

Setting the scene

Many factors impact upon individuals within organisations, regardless of the sector in which they operate. The pace of change is incessant and individuals have to cope with complex demands on a daily basis (Ling, 2003), which can lead to confusion, being overwhelmed and overloaded (Arora, 2002). In order to put this research into context, this chapter establishes the key ideas and parameters of the thesis, and explains the research questions, aims and objectives. Also, it provides details of how I carried out the work. As someone, who participated in an organisational ethnography, I believe that it is of utmost importance not to disclose details, which may identify those involved in the research. Consequently, I decided not to reveal any information, which might breach the confidentiality and anonymity of the social actors.

Who was involved in this research?

The social actors were employed by a large, service driven, public limited company, spread across the United Kingdom and Ireland. My research focused only on one part of the organisation, which had approximately four thousand employees. Specifically, it concerned those who worked in several buildings on one site in a small Scottish town. These individuals were located mainly within the open plan office on the top floor of the main building on this site where the majority of the senior directors were based. This became known, jokingly, as the 'departure lounge' due in the latter stages of this research to many directors leaving for new locations, some unknown and seemingly unexpected.

My understanding of the social aspects of this research was based on my interactions with individuals, who carried out varied roles within the company. However, my enquiries focused mainly on the company's directors, who had various responsibilities for managing the business. Some were account directors managing

contracts with clients, and others were executive directors with responsibility for the strategic choices made by the company.

It was a male dominated environment shaped by male values. Also, the female directors appeared quite masculine, which was demonstrated symbolically in their language and dress. The directors were from a variety of professional backgrounds. Many were long-serving employees, who had been promoted internally to their posts. Others had joined from external organisations. The company's own literature highlighted that, as a service driven organisation, its people were the main asset. Accordingly, the company's internal strategy, as outlined in its plans, was to retain and develop its staff and recruit new talent as the business continued to grow. Consequently, there was a significant investment in staff development. The numbers of management staff, who were undertaking university qualifications, was testimony of this. Directors appeared to understand that the members of staff were crucial to the sustained success of the organisation.

However, it was not only what individual members of staff learned formally but, also, the valuable contributions gained from their insights, gut feelings and experiences, which made them imperative to the success of the company. There appeared to be a significant proportion of informal learning in individuals' daily routines in carrying out their tasks or trying to resolve problems. Their learning was influenced by internal or external factors, which led them to find the answer to a problem. They appeared to do so subconsciously and their solutions to problems were influenced either by chance or a process of reflection and action, linked to others' informal and incidental knowledge (Marsick & Volpe, 1999). Consequently, it was unplanned and simply occurred as a result of the 'everydayness' of human experience, as explained by Merriam & Brockett (1997). It occurred as a by product of another activity or, as Wasonga and Murphy (2006) stated, was learned whilst in the process of doing something else.

Why choose directors as the focus of the study?

The directors were of most interest to me because I was required to interact with them in my role as knowledge management consultant. Such interactions were difficult because I had to question them in order to obtain the information to fulfil my role. I found that, if I asked a direct, formal question, I received quite a poor and closed response. However, when I asked questions, as part of a discussion in a more informal and relaxed setting, they replied more fully and revealed more information. These replies demonstrated their tacit knowledge and experiences. I was keen to find out more about how the directors survived and, possibly, even thrived within the organisation and partly for my own survival and participation in this social reality. I had to find out how to do so within this changing environment. I was not alone in attempting to understand the assumptions, which influenced these individuals' behaviour. I found that, in order to survive and participate in the organisation's activities, individuals, almost subconsciously, followed the same processes as I did as an ethnographer. Very quickly, I discovered that there was much detailed knowledge captured and made available but it was often out of date as things changed so rapidly. This was illustrated in documents such as organisational charts, which changed frequently due to staff changes or restructuring. These individuals appeared to keep detailed knowledge in their heads and, therefore, it was tacit knowledge. Since it was not recorded on paper, it was difficult for people to access and gain an understanding of what had previously been tried and tested within the organisation and what the key relationships were.

Over time, as I built relationships, grew networks and gained trust (normally through reputation), I was seen as someone, who, potentially, could add value to others work. Consequently, I was able to gain access to this tacit knowledge and since others would require my knowledge at some point, we worked at maintaining healthy relationships. However, this did not come naturally and I invested a significant amount of time in building and crafting these relationships. When you are new to an organisation, you do not have these established relationships and people to call on for help. Therefore, without these informal relationships and channels of

communication and knowing who has a certain knowledge base, it is very difficult to progress and fit into the organisation.

What were the complexities – why were they worth researching?

It was an ambitious and rapidly expanding organisation and, as a result, individuals experienced frequent changes. Before I joined the business, a smaller organisation was acquired along with many of its employees. Similarly, external members of staff were encouraged to transfer to this organisation when contract bids were successful. The amalgamation of the two organisations and many contract wins resulted in different information systems, terms and conditions of service and ways of working. Many employees, including myself, often found it difficult to operate within the organisation since we felt uncertain and unable to cope with the turbulent environment. Whilst its competitive structure had served the organisation well for many years and, probably, had attributed to its rapid growth, the functions were restructured with a view to sustaining the organisation's success. The old 'business units', which were thought to promote silo working, were replaced with 'business functions'. These placed more emphasis on sectors of the market as opposed to the previous 'business units'. It was recognised that there was a need for these new 'business functions' to be competitive for the organisation as a whole and not just for individual parts. These parts were perceived to be working against each other rather than working for the benefit of the whole organisation. Also, this desire for unity across the organisation meant that key performance indicators were reviewed and a coherent, company-wide IT policy based on one platform was developed. In line with the organisation's mission statement, the internal literature stated that the operating environment required an air of honest collaboration, purpose and vision. However, many employees were concerned that the restructuring just created new silos since there was frequently poor interdepartmental communication between these functional areas. As a result, fragmented patterns of thoughts and actions and poor sharing of formal knowledge meant that there was no improvement in the organisation's sub goals.

As described by Davenport (1997), knowledge could be viewed as a competitive weapon. As described by Williams (2006), there appeared to be elements of competitive intelligence, which resulted in individuals withholding knowledge, which they would share only with existing staff and with newcomers when they were accepted as trustworthy colleagues. Also, as Galliers et al, (2000) discussed, the perception was that individuals would be of less value if their knowledge was part of the public domain. Perhaps, as stated by Szulanski (1996), through their self interest and narrow mindedness, individuals were reluctant to share their tacit knowledge for fear of losing status and power. Trust played an important part in the transfer of tacit knowledge, which was personal in nature. A trusting relationship reduced the level of risk and uncertainty and suggested that individuals had a large degree of mutual understanding since they had common appreciation of shared social and cultural settings. Therefore, trust and mutual understanding, gained in their social and cultural settings were essential for the transfer of tacit knowledge (Roberts, 2000). Cormican and O'Sullivan (2003) and Cavusgil et al, (2003) believed that personal and professional networks, which had good relationships, led to the transfer of tacit knowledge. Also, individuals needed to have a good reason to share tacit knowledge and, only then, with people, whom they trusted; otherwise, simply, they would not do so (Williams, 2006). Von Krogh et al (2000) explained the importance of trust through the fact that, whenever we shared a piece of knowledge, we had to justify our beliefs. Building a relationship required sharing emotions, observations and justifications and several experiences on which trust was built Dixon (2000). This research found that many individuals developed work practices and values to advance their personal goals rather than those of the organisation. There was a large amount of informal sharing of knowledge since individuals pursued their own goals as ends in themselves with the organisation's formal goals being met through informal means. These sub cultural divisions meant that individuals had different levels of commitment to the organisation.

Over the three years of this research, the organisation changed dramatically. Not all individuals were able to adapt. I found that some were open-minded and flexible and were able to exploit these changes due to their understanding of the cultural scenario. Others were not in tune with the changes to the organisation, viewing and interpreting things from a fixed standpoint or were not equipped to progress in the

changing environment. Some social actors appeared to understand the normal practices, which promoted change. For example, these were preparedness to take risks; understanding of the vision for the organisation; openness with the people, who mattered (normally, those who had influence); and respecting and trusting other key individuals. Others tended to behave in ways, which discouraged their participation in change such as risk avoidance, ambivalence, being uncertain over which course of action to follow, opposing attitudes or feelings towards other people and their ideas. Also, they tended to have a myopic view of the organisation, which meant that many had little understanding of the vision for the organisation. This led to informal divisions of opinions and divided loyalties. Those, who were unable to cope either left the organisation by choice, were encouraged to move on, or, simply, stayed but no longer felt useful. By the final stages of this research, the organisation had evolved and, subsequently, was taken over by another organisation, which was testament to its success in spite of the apparent complexities. This led to a situation, which was quite disturbing for me to witness, whereby directors appeared to be leaving the organisation very frequently. There were mixed views on the reasons for this. Some believed that these directors left of their own accord. Others believed that they were encouraged to leave. Either way, there were differing perceptions of these 'departures', which impacted differently on employees depending on their understanding of the situation.

What did this research aim to uncover and how?

The aim of this research was to explore and uncover the formal and informal cultural clues, to reveal the reality construction process, which enabled individuals to participate within the social reality of the organisation. This was achieved by getting, as close as possible, to what individuals were experiencing. As an ethnographer, this involved spending almost three years in the organisation undertaking a relatively junior role, one which legitimised my presence in the organisation. I observed and experienced how individuals were able to develop cultural competence including their capability to adapt, survive and, perhaps, even thrive within the rapidly changing environment. I had to undertake what Boje (2001) termed double visioning, which meant moving away from focusing only on the visible, explicit,

observable elements of the organisation; looking at the tacit, cognitive element of the culture; and seeing both simultaneously. This involved, also, deconstructing situations, which were taking place during everyday communications; and interpreting the common place conditions through which individuals became skilled at 'reading' situations. This was a process, which the individuals learnt through experience, reading and rereading situations almost subconsciously. I was able to grasp and discover key social aspects by identification of the cultural clues. These revealed the social factors, which enabled individuals to understand and exploit the cultural scenario. The clues were revealed by focusing on how individuals interpreted and understood their experiences and how they made sense of the basic elements of interaction, which banded them together. As Goffman (1969) described, this was the grammar and syntax used symbolically in everyday conduct.

I was able to observe and experience how individuals were able to develop cultural competence. By this I mean the capacity, know-how and capability to adapt, survive and, perhaps, even thrive within the rapidly changing environment. I was able to piece together individual representations to understand how individuals made sense of their social world. I could not enforce this; I needed to go through the process. Like a kaleidoscope, the same pieces of glass were viewed as many different patterns at different times, these patterns could not be forced. You could not predict whether what was experienced in this organisation would be the same in another, or, indeed, in the same organisation. Just like a mosaic, which fits together, people need to look at the integral parts of the business and not only the overall picture. Like a member of the audience in a theatre, we all have different perspectives of the stage and actors. Such as our understanding of the whole performance, engagement with the performance, personal background, or even something as temperamental as how we feel on the day. However, this does not mean that what this research uncovered was invalid or unhelpful in understanding a complex social phenomenon. I was looking at this world as it appeared to me. I aimed to provide a transparent account of my experiences and that of others to improve your understanding of my perspectives of the social reality, which I experienced. Also, I aimed to present situations in practical ways and persuade you to envisage and understand them, extend your insightful horizons, and create new possibilities. As

such, this research raised questions about how difficult it could be to categorise very complicated knowledge.

My epistemological stance is that people construct their worlds, knowledge is socially constructed, and that people construct their own institutions. Latour (1986) stated that definitions of organisations arose from social phenomena, which changed with the context and that individuals held an organisation's knowledge. As regards tacit knowledge, which is knowledge demonstrated in action and, therefore, not easily verbalised, it is a way of helping us to understand and learn how and why individuals behave in what has become defined as the cultural scenario. Tacit knowledge is needed in everyday life. It is not objective or ultimate but is gained and shared by people, which means that it is socially negotiable. This research sought to uncover the perspectives of the social actors, to understand people, their motives, and their ways of acting. It acknowledges that people construct their own worlds. Knowledge is socially constructed and people construct institutions. My role, as an organisational ethnographer, was to understand and describe the social phenomena. The research questions, from which this thesis evolved, were:

- How some individuals were able to survive within the organisation?
- Why some were able to not only survive, but thrive?
- What were the personal consequences of interacting within the organisation?

There was no one answer to pursue and there was no straight forward outcome to this research. In truth, it provided more questions than answers. This may be frustrating for some, since as human beings we want answers but this was a tension, which this work had to contend with. My post modern view meant that I did not intend to provide a grand theory on human behaviour because culture is unique. Other methods and techniques might have produced a different description. It was never my intention of viewing this research as a way of changing the world. As Bauman (2003) informed us through the failure of revolutions, it is harder to change social behaviour than nature. In carrying out this research I had an interpretative view of the world. It shed light on the multiple social realities within an organisation;

and provided perspectives on how individuals made sense of the social world, which enabled them to participate in the social reality. The aim of describing the social context, relationships and processes was to provide a general understanding of a phenomenon, which was close to everyday reality and practical experiences.

This aim was achieved through the following objectives:

- Observing and interacting within the social reality for almost three years to explore and understand the cultural clues of the collective social reality of the eleven directors;
- Using a questionnaire to gather background information on senior level social actors in order to gain an initial understanding of their perspectives of the social reality;
- Carrying out eleven in-depth narrative interviews with the eleven directors to explore their interpretations of the social reality;
- Developing a theatrical mechanism of presenting intangible, tacit elements of culture; and
- Presenting a dramatic model of human behaviour as a way of analysing the cultural clues, which emerged.

The objectives of this research were not about seeking new landscapes but rather looking at them with new eyes; shifting the focus on the same landscape; and offering different perspectives. It was a study of appearances rather than reality, actions at work, key work interactions and patterns of thinking in individual perspectives. It required a way of revealing the characteristics of culture, the beliefs, and values and rituals. It was a means of understanding how people made sense of what was happening; and the symbolic discourse which, specifically, links values and beliefs. These were demonstrated in patterns of interaction, between individuals and their use of language, and showing how they made sense of their social world.

I established a 'cultural toolkit', which provided me with ways of discovering by

seeing and hearing, interpreting and reflecting. The use of metaphors provided a helpful way of revealing and discussing intangible fragments of the culture. Culture was considered as a metaphor for organisations; and, as Smircich (1991) explained, culture being viewed as something that an organisation is, rather than has. The iceberg metaphor, as described by French and Bell (1984), enabled me to focus on the tacit and explicit elements of culture; ethnography provided a reflective way of seeing and hearing. Goffman's theatre metaphor (1959) gave me a way of presenting what had emerged from the fieldwork and Burke's (1945, 1969) model of human behaviour provided a way of analysing what had been found. The outcomes of this research not only focused on what key clues emerged but, also, on the possible individual consequences of being part of the cultural scenario.

How will this research be presented in the thesis?

This introduction has sought to provide an insight into the context and processes in the organisation, which was the focus of this research. Following this introduction, the thesis reviews selected literature informing this topic. Chapter two is concerned with the methodology, based within an ethnographic tradition, and an overview of the methods used in this research. Chapter three presents the findings of this research, structured as a play with acts and scenes representing the themes and sub-themes, which emerged from a combination of the interview transcripts and my reflective accounts. Chapter four, firstly, presents a discussion of the findings by using Burke's dramatism model of human behaviour to highlight the cultural clues, which emerged, and, secondly, is in line with the themes and sub-themes, which evolved from the research. Chapters five and six present an overall interpretation of what I think these emergent themes mean before offering recommendations to individuals on how to participate within the organisational world.

Chapter Two: Literature

This chapter begins by informing the reader of my intellectual background, and presents a picture of how my perspective of organisations and culture has changed as my experiences and understanding of the literature have evolved. Rather than presenting solely a picture of my current understanding, I consider that, in the spirit of this ethnographic inquiry, I need to be transparent about my preconceived ideas and views prior to entering the research setting and how these informed my thinking. By highlighting some key areas of interest and researchers, I hope to provide an account, an 'audit trail of thought', and demonstrate how the literature, in combination with my rich experiences, has informed my understanding of the social phenomenon. In brief, as shown in Figure one below, my understanding has changed from a traditional view of an organisation with an interest in what made it survive and thrive to considering organisations as a culture, discovering how individuals understand organisations in order to themselves survive and thrive.

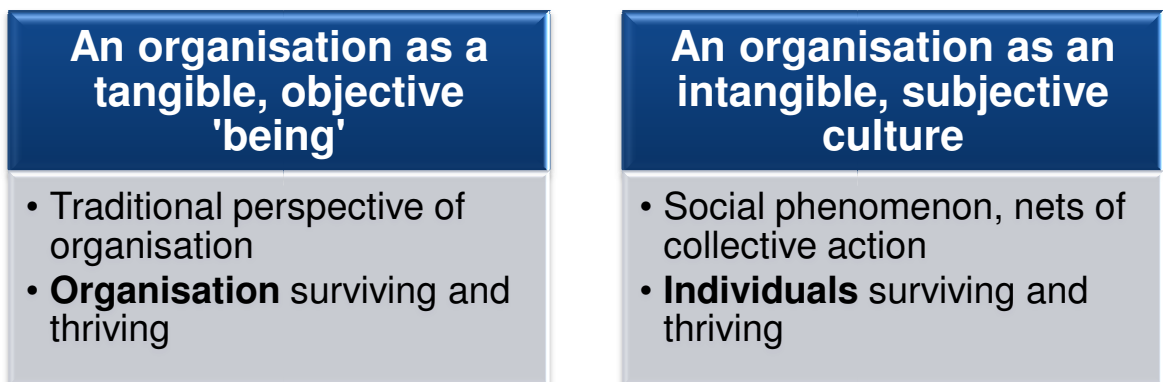


Figure one: Changing perspectives of organisations and cultures

This chapter (in combination with the next chapter on methodology with which there is a clear overlap) aims to provide an overview and evaluation of the key areas of interest, which underpin this research, and put these into context. It is presented in three parts as follows:

- An organisation as a tangible, objective being
- An organisation as an intangible, subjective culture
- Considerations and consequences of individuals operating within a culture

An organisation as a tangible, objective being

Prior to entering the organisation, I had been influenced by late 20th and early 21st century literature on strategy, knowledge management and motivation. In particular, I was inspired by Snowden's work (2000, 2001) on complexity and narrative.

Over the past ten years, my professional roles have seen me operating in – and continuing to operate in – formal structures, in which I am required to behave in a task driven manner with a focus on identifying, capturing, measuring and delivering results in time pressured environments. Perhaps, this is the reason why, in my academic roles, I had an overwhelming urge to neatly identify, capture and present information. I had the same outlook when I joined the organisation, which is the focus of this research. I was employed to carry out a role and I set about achieving it. At that time, I had a traditional view of the organisation; an interest in what made it survive and thrive. I realised fairly quickly that I was finding it extremely difficult to discover how the organisation functioned. I set about trying to decipher its workings since, on joining the organisation and even for the first year of being there, I held the view that organisations were tangible, complex beings. Competition was seen as central to organisations' successes and failures. In this regard, Porter (1985) and Montgomery and Porter (1991) were key influences but, as Senn (1998) explained, the complexities of short-lived advantages were a key concern due to relative ease of duplication from competitors. My thoughts focused mostly on the factors, which

enabled organisations to survive and thrive within complex, rapidly changing times (Ling, 2003; Rosenhead, 1998; Kurtz and Snowden (2003) and Von Oetinger, 2004).

In view of their thoughts and feelings, I saw, always, the importance of individuals within organisations and considered them as more than a mere input since they were not inanimate objects (Dickson, 1973). I considered that it was crucial for me to understand their behaviours and motivations (Maslow, 1943; Herzberg, 1987 and Wiley, 1997), since they were human assets and important in assisting organisations to develop and sustain their competitive advantages (Offsey, 1997; Pfeffer, 1998 and Wong, 2001). Ways of developing and sustaining a competitive advantage were achievable by using factors, which were not replicated easily, such as focusing on knowledge management (Davenport and Prusak, 2000 and Prusak, 2001); encouraging individuals to share their knowledge so that it could be captured, stored and accessed; and making best use of their knowledge, skills and expertise. I considered ways of exploiting individuals' explicit and tacit knowledge as a means of creating financial value (Polyani, 1966).

Tacit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Brown and Duguid, 1998 and Haldin-Herrgard, 2001) was viewed, always, as a very significant resource and much consideration was given to finding ways of encouraging individuals to share it. I had a good understanding of the enablers and the barriers such as the requirement of trust in knowledge sharing (Davenport and Prusak, 2000 and Sveiby, 2001); knowledge being viewed as power (Davenport, 1997 and Galliers et al, 2000); and physical barriers such as seating and how this could influence with whom individuals shared their knowledge and culture. Culture was considered merely as a barrier and an enabler in terms of 'strong' cultures, which were influenced by leadership (Schein, 1990; Skyrme and Amidon, 1997; Davenport and Prusak, 2000). Culture was viewed very much as something that an organisation had and not something that it was. This focused on capturing and sharing knowledge; investigating the many tools and techniques, which were thought to facilitate knowledge sharing, such as storytelling – also known as narrative –

(Reissman, 1993; Snowden, 2000, 2001, Seeley Brown at al., 2004 and Denning, 2005); communities of practice (Wenger, 1998); and mentoring.

Whilst there has been a significant shift in my epistemological view of organisations and cultures, it is useful to consider Martin's (1992) classification, as shown in Figure two below, of organisational culture - integration, differentiation and fragmentation as an illustration of bridging this change in my perspective and understanding:

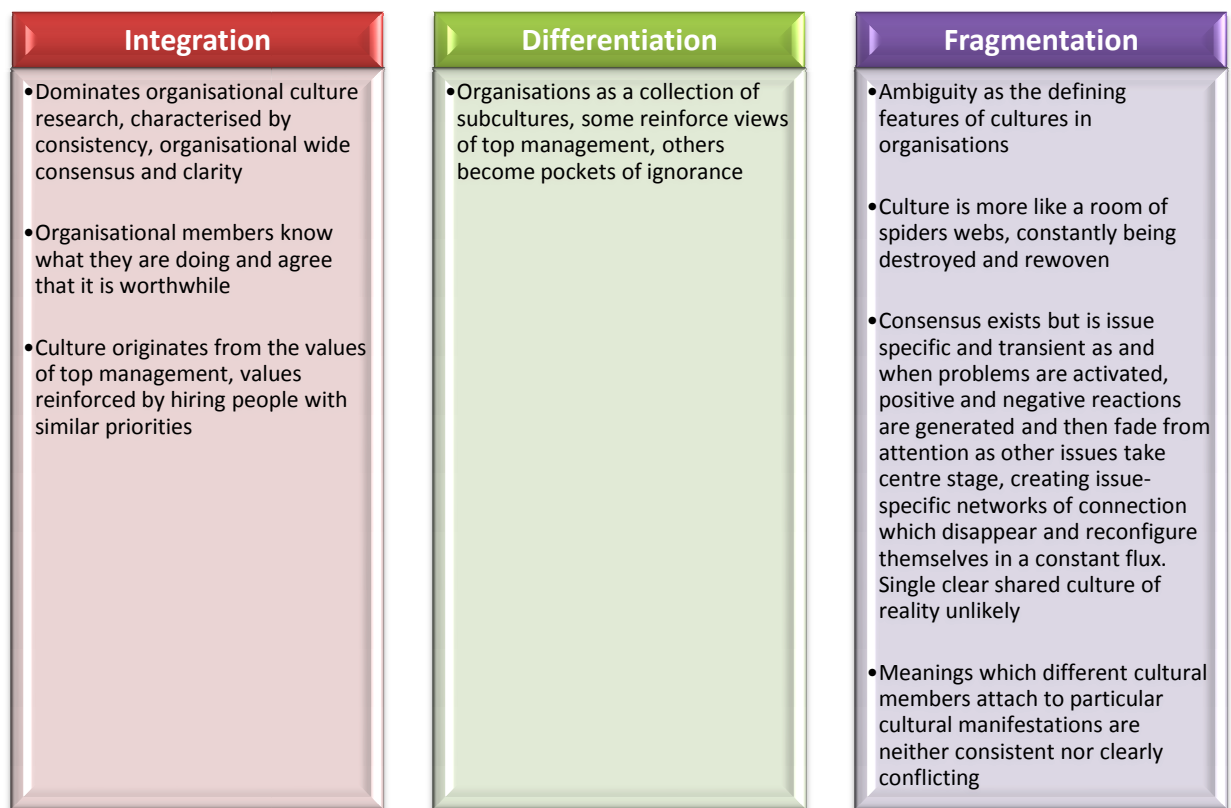


Figure two: Classification of culture

Martin (2002) believed that, if studied for long enough, all three of these cultural viewpoints could be attributed to all organisations. However, I am aware that my view has changed from being concerned with an integrated and, perhaps, even differentiated view of culture, to one that is more fragmented. In particular, my

interest changed from assisting organisations to survive and thrive within a competitive arena to considering organisations as cultures supporting individuals within them to survive and thrive within the complex social phenomenon. I discuss this in the following section.

An organisation as an intangible, subjective culture

This section begins with an acknowledgement of some key influences, which had a significant effect on my perception of organisations and cultures. Kostera's (2006) 'Organisational Ethnography: Methods and Inspirations' had a substantial bearing on this research, as did Kostera herself. Kostera's (2006) work signalled a turning point in this research; it was no less than a relief to discover her work, which inspired me at a time when I was unsure how to interpret what I had experienced and learned. During the latter stages of this research, Kostera acted as an unofficial mentor, offering advice and guidance, signposting interesting literature, and offering fresh perspectives of the social world with which I had become familiar. She helped me to make sense of something that was complex and intangible. Smircich's (1983) work on organisational culture, Morgan's (2006) research on images of organisations, Goffman's (1959) view of organisations and Burke's (1945, 1969) dramatism model of human behaviour provided me, also, with new insights of the organisation.

Metaphors offer multiple perspectives, they are part of our everyday lives, present in our language and in our thoughts and actions, the way that we think and act; our speech and writing are inherently metaphorical (Lackoff and Johnson, 2003). Metaphors play a central role in the construction of social and political reality, and, as a mechanism for creating new meanings and realities, are essential vehicles for humans to understand things. As Lackoff and Johnson (2003) explained, metaphors allow us to view something in terms of another, and are a way of interpreting reality and sharing new ideas. Hirsch (1997) discussed metaphors as way of interpreting reality and explained that the relevant analogies enabled new ideas to be shared. Therefore, I considered several metaphors to demonstrate perspectives of the social phenomenon being researched. This section provides an

overview of the culture as the root metaphor for an organisation, whilst theatre will be discussed as a way of revealing the culture, which cannot be seen and presented easily.

Kostera (2006:79) explained that organisations were by their very nature complicated and difficult to define as they were constructed socially, were intangible and were unable to be manifested in any other simple way. As Morgan (2006:337) stated, they were *'.....complex and multifaceted and paradoxical'*. Over the years, I appeared to have humanised organisations as I thought and communicated about them as though they were people and, as such, discussed my relationships with them, my loyalty to them and at times my betrayal and hurt by them. I realise now that the organisation is not a human being and that I had relationships with people. I understand organisations to be something, which happens when people act together (Smircich, 1983). They are nets of collective action undertaken in an effort to shape people's world by using dramatic means to answer questions, which require the creativity within the heads of those involved (Kostera, 2006). Organisations are socially constructed, subjective, and an ongoing proactive process of reality construction. Morgan (2006) stated that organisations are a living phenomenon through which people jointly create and re-create the social reality through their social interaction.

Viewing organisations as cultures provides a focus on the symbolic significance of almost every aspect of life, enabling us to view every aspect in new ways (Morgan, 2006). This research views culture as an epistemological metaphor of the organisation (Turner 1971), and, as such, views culture as something that an organisation is rather than something that it has (Smircich, 1983). Kostera (2006: 39) stated:

(that culture is) '.... medium of economic life in that it enables the people involved in the organisation to communicate and gives meaning to their actions, experiences and choices'

It is a system of shared meaning (Goodenough,1971; Agar, 1982) and shared

knowledge (Halowell,1955, Geertz,1973), which is a combination of deep seated, subconscious inherited ideas, and values and beliefs, shared by individuals, (Lundy and Cowling, 1996, Pettigrew, 1979; Schein, 1985; Sackmann, 1991; Hatch, 1993) which form the basis of social action (Smircich, 1983). It acts like social glue, which holds the organisation together or, perhaps, pushes people out, impacts on how individuals think consciously and subconsciously, make decisions and, ultimately, the way in which they perceive, feel and act (Hansen and Wernerfelt, 1989; Schein, 1990). Individuals are both participants and creators of culture, through their shared values, beliefs, meanings, understandings and making sense of things. A process of reality construction enables them to see and understand behaviour within organisations. Such a process could be likened to a cultural toolkit, which enables them to solve problems as required. Therefore, considering organisations as cultures provide a focus on the patterns, which help individuals to cope by looking at the cognitive systems and explaining how people think, reason, and make decisions.

Van Maanen (1988:3) stated that, *'(culture is not) visible, but is made visible through representation'* and required an investigation of the patterns, which make the organised action possible. As Shutz (1983) explained, symbols were meaning carriers, which granted meaning to reality constituting lenses through which we attempted to decipher reality. As Van Maanen (1995) stated, culture was constituted by the actions and words of individuals, and language was symbolic in nature since it provided representations for both the construction and communication of conceptions of reality. Language facilitated shared realities but these were fleeting and open to reinterpretation and renegotiation; individuals saw other perspectives and ideas allowing them to reinterpret the world and environment of which they were a part.

Within organisations, people use their tacit knowledge and face-to-face methods to share with other people what they know, their thoughts and their experiences (Hansen, 1999). A large amount of information, required to carry out organisational activities and processes, is done routinely and tacitly (Lubit, 2001; Spender, 1996) this tacitly held communication normally takes the form of narrative (Boje, 1991, 1995). Individuals use stories, metaphors, and analogies and shared experiences to

communicate for mutual understanding (Nonaka, 1994) as they organise their experience and knowing in the form of narrative (Bruner, 1991). Phillips (1995) argued that meanings in organisations were created and discovered in people's narrative practices; it was a fundamental structure of making human meaning (Bruner, 1991; Ricoeur, 1991). Rossiter (2002) contended that narratives stimulated individuals' understanding and provided a basis for cognitive and emotional responses to their experiences and other people's views of the world. Subsequently, narratives were considered to be an essential part of organisational life and its everyday communication (Boje, 1995; Gabriel, 1995; Czarniawska, 1998). It is a common view that storytelling, or narrative (Seeley-Brown et al, 2004; Denning, 2005, Snowden 2000, 2001), is a natural way for individuals to share knowledge. Organisational life is full of stories (Boje, 1991; Dunford and Jones, 2000 and Hopkinson, 2003), and these are an effective way of transmitting social knowledge as the listener comes to participate in the construction of the story and, therefore, has a stake in it (Linde, 2001).

Humans have a huge capacity to absorb signals subconsciously in face-to-face communications. It is as much social as it is practical since people communicate a lot about their interests and their need for information while talking to colleagues and friends. As narrative is fundamentally social, it is reliant upon interactions between people (Linde, 2001). Informal communication (Grosser, 1991), where narrative occurs, requires social relationships with common values, and trust as it is both personal and subjective (Sternberg, 1997). Often, it often involves sharing thoughts and feelings and, as a result, can help develop relationships (Wasonga and Murphy, 2006). Gloet (2006) stated that knowledge should be viewed as a 'social creation', which stemmed from people's interactions; it can be found within relationships (Williams, 2006) and sharing occurs when individuals cooperate voluntarily (Chan and Mauborgne, 1999).

Understanding what motivates people, to share what they know with others and who they turn to for help, is an interesting dimension of the making sense process. Work is one of the most absorbing things people can think and talk about. It fills the greater part of the waking day for most people; for the fortunate ones it is the source

of great satisfaction; for many others it is the cause of grief (Herzberg et al, 1993). This is why psychologists and other behavioural scientists have been attracted for a long time to the relationship between people and their work (Wiley, 1997). According to Mayo (1945), social needs are just as important in the workplace as those of a physiological nature; and as Kostera (2006) said, feelings cannot be disregarded at work.

Considering organisations as theatres provides a lens for examining organisational life; understanding how people interpret the meanings of manifestations; and how these are used to understand working lives. It draws attention to aspects of organisations, which should not be ignored. Such aspects have formal and informal manifestations. Blau and Scott (1962) believed that it was impossible to know or understand the dynamics within organisations without considering their formal and informal aspects. Similarly, Pettigrew (1979) conducted research into the informal dimension of organisations, which suggested that they consisted of cognitive systems explaining how people thought, reasoned and made decisions. Directing our attentions to the visible and the cognitive aspects of culture, Czarniawaska (in Bhardwaj and Monin, 2006), commented on Maurits Cornelis Escher's (1898-1972) art, as shown in Figure three below:

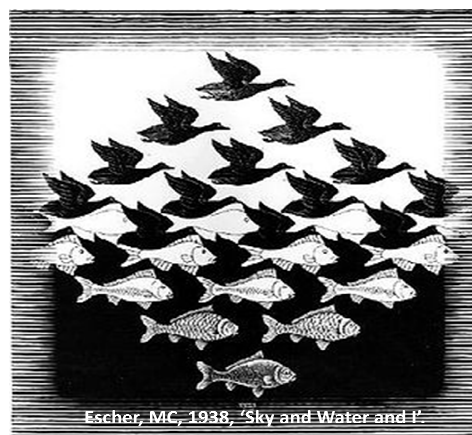


Figure three: Seeing both formal and informal aspects of culture

They pointed out that much of management and organisation theory was focused above the water line seeing only the black swans, whilst deconstructionists saw the fish below the waterline in addition to the black swans. Boje (2001) termed this double visioning. Similarly, French and Bell (1984) proposed the iceberg metaphor to draw our attention towards the formal and informal aspects of culture. The tip of the iceberg represented the visible aspects of culture, the rational parts of organisational life, which were made up of social constructions and meaning, and were essential to understanding how individuals within organisations functioned. The observed cognitive aspects of cultures such as values and beliefs were represented below the waterline (Sackmann, 1991). These manifestations were not mutually exclusive and both gave insights into an organisation's dynamics.

Considering organisations as theatres provides, also, a focus on how people behave within the cultural scenario (Kostera, 2006). Organisations have been described as theatres for performance of roles, dramas, and scripts (Goffman 1959; Mangham and Overington, 1983). The theatre metaphor enables us to make sense and helps our understanding of the world in which we live and create (Czarniawska – Joerges and Jacobsson, 1995). It highlights the embedded, hidden issues, illuminates what is normally in the shade, and elaborates the social elements of the organisation. These are the social interactions within the social context of the organisation. Any branch of human activity *'pay (s) daily tributes to theatricality, all comply with the principles ruling the stage'*, (Evrieff 1927:8). Theatre provides an analytical tool, which offers insight, stimulates and directs investigation; it is a way of perceiving the reality of the organisation and facilitates an interesting interpretation of the research material (Kostera, 2006). However, I heeded Goffman's (1974:1) warning not to literalise his theatrical metaphor into a conviction that 'all the world is a stage', as the stage involved more than theatricals. It would be misguided for someone attending a theatrical performance to suppose that this performance had materialised without preparation only on the basis of the activities, which visibly took place on the stage.

Considerations and consequences of individuals operating within a complex environment

Many external factors impinge upon individuals within organisations, regardless of the sector in which they operate. They are not considered part of a stable environment and are faced with uncertainty and instability (Von Oetinger, 2004); the pace of change is frequent and they are faced with an overbearing level of complexity on a daily basis (Ling, 2003), which can lead to confusion, being overwhelmed and feeling overloaded (Arora, 2002). Therefore, individuals have to make sense of situations daily and are engaged in an on-going process of defining and sharing realities and making sense of the world Schutz (1962-66). Weick (1995:7) stated that sense making is:

'....concerned with meaningful action, how individuals make sense of their situations and thus come to define and share realities that may become objectified in routinised ways'

Individuals play an unconscious, proactive role in creating their world and, when making sense of it, they are making sense of themselves, others, institutions and events. They are reflecting on and creating meaning based on interpretations of both external and internal interactions, which are constructed often on the cultural accumulations held subconsciously in their long-term memories. They go between facts and feelings, personal experiences and beliefs when engaged in making sense of their situations, which is often an implicit process, occurring in socially situated ways. Weick (1995) described the sense making processes, through which we shape and structure our realities, as social enactment with cultural artefacts shaping our ongoing reality. We base most of our understanding of organisations on the processes, which produce systems of shared meaning. Organisations are socially constructed realities, which are as much in their members' minds as they are in concrete structures, rules and relationships (Morgan, 2006).

Lackoff and Johnson (2003) stated that our conceptual systems are normally tacit; the way we think and act can be automatic. Polanyi (1966) explained that we know more than we can tell, and at any given moment individuals are only conscious of a small portion of what they know as tacit knowing and understanding becomes automatic and effortless (Bennett and Gabriel, 1999). Tacit knowledge, is a combination of intuition (O'Dell and Grayson, 1998; Leonard and Sensiper, 1998; Sternberg and Horvath, 1999; Giunipero, Dawley and Anthony, 1999; Augier and Vendelo, 1999; Augier and Vendelo, 1999), beliefs (Daniels, 1995; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Saint-Onge, 1996; Brown and Duguid, 1998; Durrance, 1998), mental models (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Leonard and Sensiper, 1998; Durrance, 1998; Gore and Gore, 1999) skills (Polanyi, 1966; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Brockmann and Anthony, 1998; Bennett and Gabriel, 1999; Augier and Vendelo, 1999) and hunches (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Tacit knowledge can be held individually and collectively; it is socially constructed and socially distributed between people working together, who develop and share knowledge as a collective effort (Berger and Luckman, 1966). However, because it is highly personal, it is difficult to communicate with others (Polanyi, 1962; Winter, 1987; Hamel, 1991; Nonaka, 1994; Von Hippel, 1994; Stein and Zwass, 1995), which is why it is difficult for individuals to make sense of the social realities of which they are a part. It is in the processes and policies, which people use to do their jobs, as well as in the conversations people have in the corridors, by email and in telephone calls. Individuals do not know necessarily that they are applying it because it comes effortlessly. Tacit knowledge lies in the background of our thinking and makes that thinking possible (Mooradian, 2005). It can enable individuals within organisations to understand the clues, which reveal the cultural scenario (Kostera, 2006).

Traditionally, when psychologists began to write about intelligence, they focused on cognitive elements. Recognising that not only cognitive aspects of intelligence were worthy of consideration, Thorndike (1920: 228) suggested the existence of social intelligence, which involved *'the ability to understand and manage men and woman, boys and girls – to act wisely in human relations'*. Weschsler (1940) referred to the 'non intellectual' as well as 'intellectual' elements, which were the affective, personal and social factors. Some individuals are able to recognise the meanings of emotions and their relationships and to reason and problem solve on the basis of

them. Emotional intelligence is involved in the capacity to perceive emotions, assimilate emotion-related feelings, understand the information of those emotions and manage them (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). In a website entitled 'Emotional Intelligence Information', which was dedicated to communicating scientific information about emotional intelligence, Mayer and others stated that we lived in the information age and were dependent on using information wisely.

Caruso and Mayer (2008) believed that some individuals had a greater capacity than others to process sophisticated information about emotions and to use this information to guide their thinking about behaviour. They described emotional abilities as a falling continuum from those, who were at the lower level in carrying out fundamental psychological functions (such as the capacity to perceive emotions accurately), to those, who were more complex developmentally and who operated in the service of personal self management and goals (such as the capacity to manage emotions accurately). Mayer and Salovey (1997) said that these skills could be arranged in a hierarchy of four branches which included (a) abilities to perceive emotions in oneself and others accurately, (b) using emotions to facilitate thinking, (c) understanding emotions, emotional language, and the signals conveyed by emotions and lastly, (d) managing emotions so as to attain specific goals. The individual with high emotional intelligence was generally better at perceiving emotions, using them in thought, understanding their meanings and managing emotions better than others.

McClelland (1973) was amongst a growing group of researchers, who were becoming concerned with how little traditional tests of cognitive intelligence told us about what it took to be successful in life. All emotional information is crucial since it is one of the primary forms of information which we, as individuals, process but not all individuals process it effectively. Rosenthal (1977) found that people, who were best at identifying other's emotions, were more successful in their work as well as in their social lives. Feist and Barron (1996) informed us of a study, which was carried out with eighty PhD graduates, who underwent personality tests in the 1950s, and, subsequently, were tracked down forty years later. The study found that emotional abilities were four times more important than IQ in determining professional success

and prestige. Cherniss (2000: 5) argued that in comparison with their peers, social and emotional factors mattered more than IQ. He commented:

'....if you're a scientist, you probably needed an IQ of 120 or so simply to get a doctorate and a job. But then it is more important to be able to persist in the face of difficulty and to get along with colleagues and subordinates than it is to have an extra 10 or 15 points of IQ. The same is true for other occupations'.

Similarly, Bachman (1988) found that the most effective leaders in the US Navy were warmer, more outgoing, more expressive emotionally, dramatic and sociable individuals. People with high emotional intelligence are said to be more socially competent; to have better quality relationships; and are viewed as more interpersonally sensitive than those with lower emotional intelligence (Brackett et al, 2006, Lopes et al, 2004, Lopes, Salovey and Straus, 2003).

There is a need to consider ways of helping individuals develop a tacit understanding of the cultural scenario (Kostera, 2006). Individuals require cognitive and practical skills to enable them to participate in frequently changing environments. As Morgan (2006:89 - 90) stated that they have to be:

'....skilled in understanding the paradigms, metaphors, mind-sets, or mental models that underpin how the organisation operates', '..... questioning the status quo, considering alternatives avoiding being myopic and accepting of the current situation', '... challenging and changing the basic rules of the game'.

In order to develop social competence, individuals must have the capacity, knowledge and capability in the culture to be able to adapt, survive and, perhaps, even thrive in these changing times. If unable to do so, individuals may blame themselves for being unable to understand situations when, in fact, they are being influenced by the complexity with which they are not equipped to cope (Ling, 2003). Those, unable to understand and struggle to survive, may employ, what Argyris and

Schön (1974) called, defensive routines. When the status quo is threatened, they may employ face saving techniques to protect themselves from embarrassment or threat (Morgan, 2006). By their lacking the cultural toolkit, which comprises the mental structures and processes for dealing with challenges, could mean an inability to adapt to changes or to identify and take on informal roles. They may not have necessarily a feeling on which roles they were supposed to play due to lack of social competence within the culture. Individuals may have to employ improvisation rather than following their scripts to the letter. Alternatively, they work through their difficulties of everyday life by using their extensive repertoire, which facilitates social repairs such as role distancing behaviour or adjusting their expressions so as to convey the impression, which they are claiming (Clark and Mangham, 2004). Whilst carrying out their roles, individuals may have to undertake 'professional detachment', similar to the scenario provided by Burke (1999) where an employment adviser interacted with a client, who was dirty and smelt of alcohol. She believed that he was not playing his role in the act of obtaining a job, and, therefore, she went through the motions of playing her role, doing what was formally required with no extra, informal effort. Diderot (1773) provided an extreme example of an actor, comparing them to a whore, who is able to detach from the situation, to show that she has professional competence; individuals could be faced within this within organisations to varying degrees.

Intuition encourages individuals to do what they think feels right, an emotional response, which complements their knowledge of what they understand about a subject; enabling them to act in a situation. This cognitive reasoning enables individuals to make sense of experience. Being reflective can enable them to have an understanding of the social reality and their role within it.

Moon (1999:63) defined reflective practice as:

'a set of abilities and skills to indicate the taking of a critical stance, an orientation to a problem solving or state of mind'

Reflective practitioners or individuals within organisations are engaged in activities,

which they can use to reflect on their strengths, weaknesses and areas for development. Claxton (1999:18) has suggested that:

'learning to learn, or the development of learning power, is getting better at knowing when, how and what to do when you don't know what to do'

Reflective practice forces individuals to examine the basis on which they believe something to be true, reflecting on what they know and do not know. Reflective practitioners are not just skilful or competent but thoughtful, wise and contemplating, whose work involves intuition, insight and artistry (Schön, 1983). Acknowledging their intuitive capacity helps individuals to acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses and understand the informal roles, which they can undertake within the social reality. Many individuals may appear not only to understand the social world but, also, they are able to exploit it to thrive. In itself, being successful within an organisation is no bad thing. However, individuals, who appear to be successful, regardless of the cost, are worthy of further consideration.

Goffman (1959: 28 – 29) explained the parts, which individuals play in putting on shows for the benefit of others. He discussed the spectrum of sincerity and cynicism in relation to their roles. On cynicism he believed that the performer would attempt to guide the audience only as a means to other ends. With this 'professional disengagement', these individuals might gain unprofessional pleasures from their masquerades knowing that they could toy at will with something, which the audience had to take seriously. However, Goffman added, also, that not all cynical performers were interested in deluding their audiences. Some might do it for the audiences' own good, such as those in service organisations, who told customers what they wanted to hear or doctors, who offered placebos. He added that the term 'sincere' was reserved for individuals, who believed in the impression fostered by their own performance. Goffman, also, stated that there was something competitive or exploitive about all encounters and the social values and institutions, which were present in the setting, influenced whether actors could use the resources to their advantage (in Burns, 1992). Similarly, Manning (1991) suggested that dramaturgical analysis was based on a presumption that we were all cynical

manipulators and this was applicable only as a guide to groups' behaviours, who were trying to influence others or were perceived as trying to influence others, in public settings. Berger (1963) did not regard this as manipulation of the social structure but rather as using the structure for one's own ends.

Supporting individuals to survive within the organisational world

Individuals within organisations need to be supported to participate within these complex social realities. Therefore, there is a requirement for a people centred management style, which requires a change in business models. There is a need for less bureaucracy, more informal communications, and new ways of exploring and understanding organisations. There is an acceptance that management and individuals at all levels have an impact on social construction; they have symbolic consequences. Managers must now consider their impact on the social construction of reality within their organisations and what they can do differently to gain a better understanding of the significance of their actions and achieve more positive impacts. The role of management must change from structuring tasks to shaping behaviour. Managers should strive to ensure that individuals' talents are used fully. There is a need for two way communications leading to more consensus and integration rather than using divide and rule (Follett, 1868-1933). Mintzberg (1999) explained the role of the 'quiet manager', an individual, who would empower, inspire and care about colleagues. This would lend itself to the complex social phenomena of which we now find ourselves a part. Similarly, Whitehead (1929) believed that, as individuals, we needed to be more aware of social experiences, 'to live, to live well, to live better'.

This chapter has discussed ways of seeing fragments of culture. The next chapter considers ways of enabling individuals to not only see them but, also, to interpret them.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter presents the theoretical underpinnings of the research and the procedures followed, which justify the approach I adopted. The aim of this research was to shed light on the multiple cultural realities within an organisation, and provide perspectives on how individuals made sense of the social world, which enabled them to participate in the complex phenomenon. I investigated a set of relatively common assumptions, which were taken for granted by individuals within an organisation. These assumptions, represented by collective experience, were held tacitly and were demonstrated metaphorically and symbolically, and, therefore, were not easily identifiable. This aim of this research was achieved through the following objectives:

- Observing and interacting within the social reality for almost three years to reveal cultural clues of the director level employees' collective social reality;
- Using a questionnaire to gather background information on senior level social actors, in order to gain an initial understanding of their perspectives of the social reality;
- Carrying out eleven in-depth narrative interviews to discuss interpretations of the social reality;
- Developing a theatrical mechanism of presenting intangible, tacit elements of the culture; and
- Presenting a dramatic model of human behaviour as a way of analysing the cultural clues, which emerged.

The chapter is presented in four interrelated sections:

- The research parameters
- Uncovering the cultural scenario
- Interpreting the cultural scenario
- Presenting interpretations

The Research parameters

The philosophical and theoretical parameters of this research are summarised below:

Ontology - It was based upon an interpretative phenomenology. My views were influenced by my desire to explore meanings and interpretations by uncovering the experiences of director level employees within an organisation. These revealed the content of their conscious experiences such as judgements, perceptions and emotions.

Epistemology - Knowledge about consciousness, which were intangible, mental constructions. They were not discovered but constructed as individuals interacted with one another whilst trying to make sense of their social world.

Methodology - Ethnography enabled me to take into account the knowledge demonstrated in everyday social interactions in the workplace. Multiple perspectives and influences, which shaped the social world were revealed, by being made aware of individual experiences and perceptions.

Figure four: Philosophical and theoretical parameters of the research

This research explored multiple meanings and interpretations. The basic assumptions about the nature of reality; the way I thought about the social world; and how this was perceived by director level employees and those individuals with whom I interacted on a daily basis within the organisation; were interpretative. It was impossible to capture truth since truth was viewed as relative with there being no one reality. There were many possible realities and what was true for one person might not have been true for another. It was dependent upon individual

experiences. This research focused on subjective topics such as structures of experience and consciousness and the content of the conscious experiences such as judgements, perceptions and emotions. It was a study of appearances rather than reality.

It uncovered how individuals constructed meaning and was experienced from the subjective first person point of view. The aim was to uncover various types of experiences ranging from taken for granted assumptions, thought, memory, imagination and social activity. Perception is the background of experience, which guides every conscious action: we cannot separate ourselves from our perceptions of the world. It is concerned with providing a direct description of human experience and is a method of describing the nature of our perceptual contact with the world. Phenomenology is about gathering detailed information about these perceptions through inductive methods and representing them from the perspective of the individuals involved in the research. I discovered the world as it was experienced by those involved in this research. It was about the nature of their and my own experiences and the meanings, which were attached to these experiences.

Whilst I have a phenomenological view of the world, there are commonalities between interpretative phenomenology and symbolic interactionism. These are acknowledged within this research. Blumer (1969:188) coined the term symbolic interaction and believed that, *'the position of symbolic interaction requires the student to catch the process of interpretation through which actors construct their actions'*. Symbolic interactionists, such as Blumer, believe that it is a social theory with distinctive epistemological implications and the interpretative phenomenological approach is deemed to be an epistemological approach in its own right. However, whilst there is a parallel due to their antipathy for positivism and their common interpretative stance, Bryman and Bell (2003) warned that symbolic interaction should not be exaggerated.

Although it is commonly accepted that phenomenology throws light on human experience and is an attempt to describe and understand phenomena, there are many perspectives of phenomenology, as outlined by the Encyclopaedia of Phenomenology (1997) and shown in the Figure 5 below:

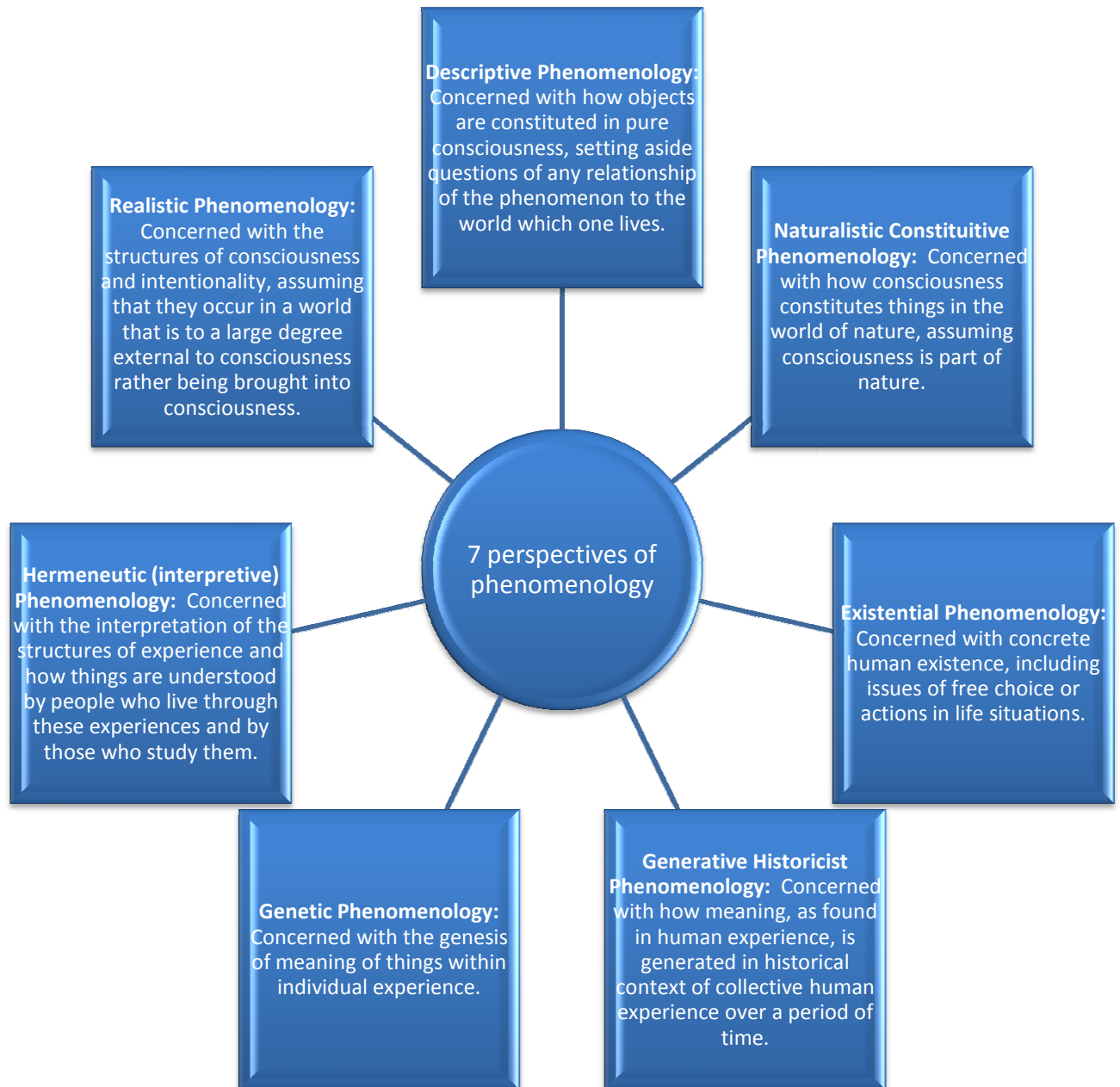


Figure five: 7 perspectives of phenomenology

For this study, the main two perspectives considered were descriptive and interpretative phenomenology (interpretative phenomenology is hermeneutics, which

is the process through which people interpret and explain). Kock (1995) made distinctions between descriptive and interpretive phenomenology as detailed below:

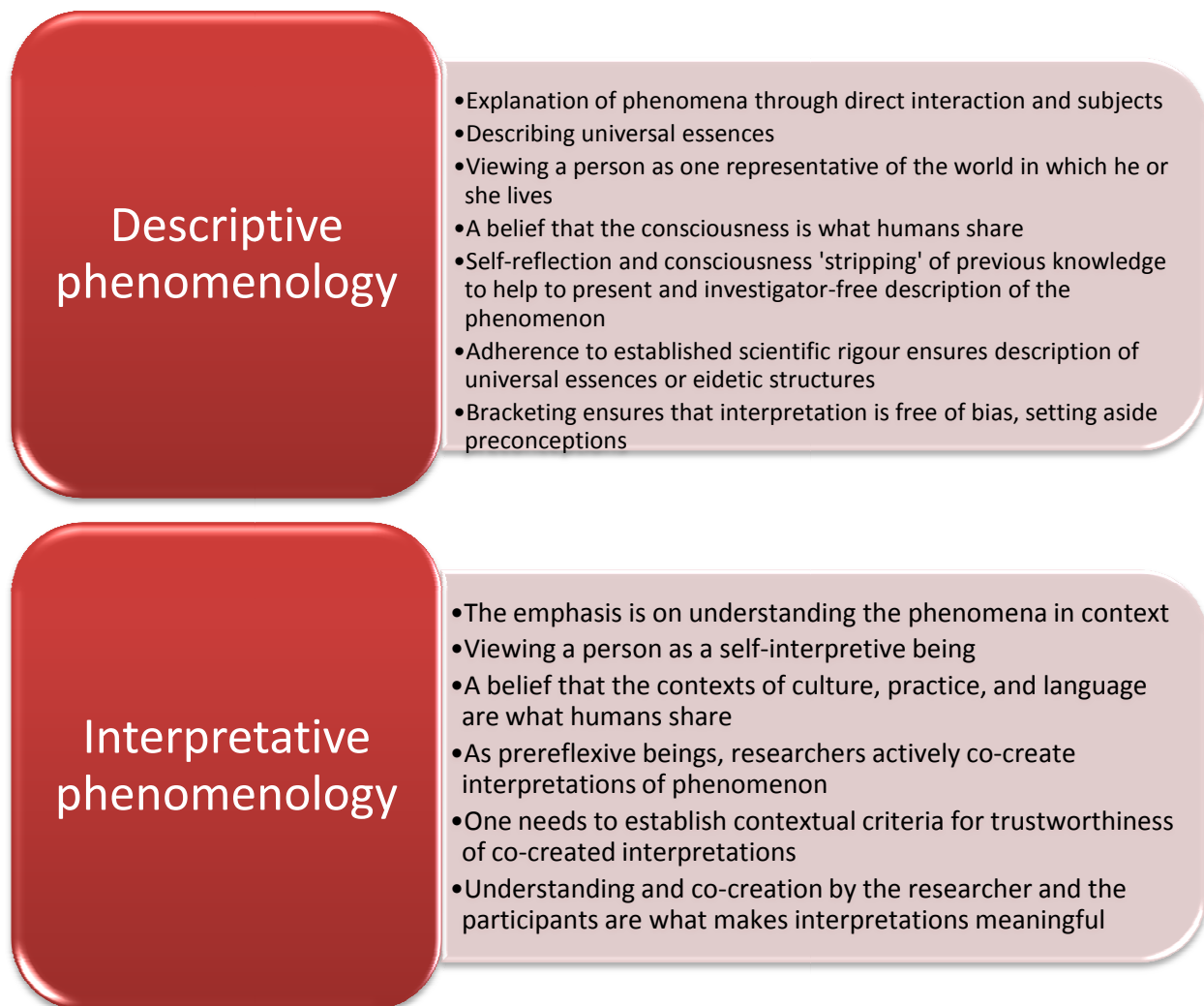


Figure six: Descriptive and Interpretive Phenomenology

Husserl (1859-1938), the founder of phenomenology, believed that consciousness is the condition of human experience and that the meaning of lived experiences might be unravelled only through one-to-one interactions between the researcher and the research participants. These interactions involved attentive listening, communication and observation to create a representation of reality, which was more sophisticated than previous understanding. Initially, I thought this research adopted a descriptive

phenomenological stance as I was seeking to uncover universal aspects of a social phenomenon and produce a solution by looking for similarities in numerous human experiences, and searching for patterns. Since it was a central concern, I viewed the context as having peripheral importance when considering individuals in isolation to their culture, social context and the historical period in which they lived. Through naivety of the phenomena, I believed that I could 'bracket' (Husserl, 1970) myself, my ideas and beliefs from that which I was studying. I thought these were things that could be separated and inspected. I believed that I could dissect phenomena from the world and inspect it and, by doing so, I could suspend all preconceptions with regard to the phenomenon. Also, I believed that I could confront the subject matter on its own terms, believing that my preconceptions almost could be set aside whilst I listened, interacted, and analysed the participants' stories. In fact, this was a major personal concern in what were, new and uncharted ways of carrying out research. I was fearful that, if I made an error or became involved, my research would be flawed. As time elapsed and I gained experience in the phenomena, I discovered that, not only was it impossible to remain detached and removed from the process, but, also, it would be wrong and very difficult behave in such a way.

Heidegger (1889 – 1976) was a student of Husserl and along with Kierkegaard, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, developed Husserl's approach. This approach to interpretative phenomenology defined human beings as interpretative (hermeneutic) and capable of finding significance in their own lives. The notion of 'dasein' (Heidegger, 1962), which described the human way of being in the world, emphasised that individuals could not remove themselves from various contexts, which influenced their choices and gave meaning to their experiences of life. We are all part of this phenomenon, which is relevant to the multiplicity of the roles that we each play. This research aimed to identify the participants' meanings of their experiences from the blend of my understanding of the phenomenon, participant generated information and data obtained from other sources. This included the explicit information captured in the internal and external information produced for the organisation's different audiences. The internal documentation often described plans for achieving their aspirations, for example, to increase the number of contract wins, whilst the external documentation provided another perspective. This was one, which would help them to achieve their internal aspirations, for example,

making them seem attractive to other organisations. Heidegger's (1962) fore-structure of understanding was linked with how we understood the world and such understanding was linked with how we interpreted reality. It explained that, as a researcher, one had to reflect on past experiences and preconceptions and bias so that during the interpretative process one could access the participants' fore-structure of understanding.

The fore-structure of understanding has three stages:

- Fore-having: All individuals come to a situation with practical familiarity or background practices from their own world, which make interpretations possible.
- Fore-sight: The socio-cultural background gives a point of view from which to make an interpretation.
- Fore-conception: The socio-cultural background provides a basis for anticipation of what might be found in an investigation.

I was able to blend my own meanings and those of the participants by participating in this circular process, moving back and forth between the whole and its parts, and between my fore-structure of understanding and what was learned through investigation. Benner (1994) summarised Heidegger's approach as shown in the figure below:



Figure seven: Interpretative Phenomenology

The interpretative phenomenological ontology became most relevant to this research. Viewing the world in this way enabled me to consider that we all came to

the investigation with fore-structures of understanding shaped by our backgrounds. In the process of interaction and interpretation, we cogenerated an understanding of the social phenomena. It was a departure from considering one reality and seeking to provide solutions to a focus on nuances, differences and ambiguities in our contextualised experiences of life. As humans, we are interpretative beings, capable of finding significance and meaning in our own lives.

As Crotty (1998) indicated, an epistemology is a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know; the basic assumptions about what we know about both reality and the relationship between knowledge and reality; and what is possible to know about reality. My epistemology was constructivist as I was involved actively in making meaning of my knowledge of things in the social world. I believed that people constructed institutions in their worlds and that knowledge was socially constructed. Latour (1986) discussed that definitions of organisations arose from social phenomenon which changed with the context and that knowledge of an organisation resided with individuals. Meanings were constructed subjectively and were experienced by more than one person. On constructivism, Crotty (1998: 42) stated:

'It is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context... In the constructionist view, as the word suggests, meaning is not discovered by constructed'.

As described by Guba and Lincoln (1994), this research viewed realities as intangible mental constructions, which were socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature and dependent in respect of their form and content on the individual persons and groups holding the constructions.

View of organisations

This research was concerned with people, their experiences and perspectives, their tacit knowledge and understandings, and their social reality. It did not class behaviour as logical and rational. This would have paid no attention to the ethnographic complexity of the workplace (Brockman and Anthony, 1998; Brown and Digid, 1998). The iceberg metaphor (French and Bell, 1984) is useful in helping us to understand the complexity of the cultural scenario by assisting us in identifying cultural clues.



Figure eight: Tangible and intangible view of organisations and cultures

Whilst the traditional view is that organisations are tangible with individuals being external to them, this research regards organisations as cultures with social properties, which are the outcomes of interactions between individuals rather than being separate from those involved in its construction. As Boje (2001) stated, double visioning is required in order to identify aspects of the culture being researched. This meant that I had to be able to see above and below the metaphoric iceberg waterline. I had to be able to interpret multiple perspectives and gain insights into the many realities, which I and the social actors experienced. In searching for clues of the cultural scenario, I reviewed internal documentation such as organisational charts (There were many and, due to frequent changes, were almost out of date as soon as they were published.), policies, the organisation's vision, mission statements and relevant operating procedures. As Morgan (2006) explained, these acted as points of reference, which provided some indication of how people thought and made sense of the contexts in which they were operating and provided cultural clues.

Focusing on a single site, this research was concerned with the complexity and nature within one setting. As Geertz (1973) explained, focusing on a branch of a large organisation provided an in-depth account and 'rich description' of the unique features and complex social realities. I was aware that good access to a research 'site' was a rare and precious resource. I was reminded by Kostera (2006:51), that I was 'lucky' to have access to senior level employees. This arrangement was reciprocal and, perhaps, like any relationship, it was open to abuse at times. In terms of physical, mental and emotional labour, the organisation received a lot in return for my access to these individuals. The early stages of the research focused greatly on actively building relationships with social actors, with whom I interacted in fulfilling my role within the organisation, building mutual understandings and gaining access to key informants.

Methods

As someone interested in people, I found studying culture interesting and enlightening, as highlighted by Kostera (2006). Cultural research, such as this, has increased in popularity since the 1980's. Bryman and Bell (2003) stated that the popularity of ethnography within business and management research was increasing. Some people viewed ethnography as crucial in developing a deeper understanding of the world of management and organisations (Van Maanen, 1979; Rosen, 1991; Bate, 1997). In addition Smith (2001) discussed ethnographies of work and the work of ethnographers. As an ethnographer, I was not an armchair academic examining the social world at arm's length. I was a paid employee, working and researching openly within an exciting organisation, which I found captivating. I learnt by undertaking a paid role and I engaged in the same social processes as those whom I found interesting and puzzling.

The world, which I explored, was one of inter-subjectively constructed meanings, aiming to reveal individuals' understanding of the world and their situation. Methods were used to bring to the surface the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives. Ethnographic methodology provided a relevant theoretical basis for the collection and analysis of data; it was the way in which I researched practically what I believed could be known. It acknowledged actions taken at work and provided the possibility of identifying key work interactions and patterns of thinking from individual perspectives. This allowed me to take into account the tacit and explicit knowledge shown in everyday social interactions in the workplace and to determine multiple perspectives and influences, which shaped the social world. As part of the social world being researched, I was a reflective researcher and, therefore, I was implicated in this research. Prior experience and understanding effected what I constructed and witnessed. I engaged in critical self-reflection as my social background, assumptions, positioning and behaviour affected the research process. I was part of the natural setting, observing social processes in a naturally occurring context, and trying to understand people. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) described, I was attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings, which people placed on them; gathering personal experiences, motivations, customs and ways of acting. I observed the day

to day activities of the social actors, and focused on the language, symbols, myths, stories and rituals, which revealed the characteristics of culture. These were demonstrated in the patterns of interactions between individuals, the language used, the images and themes explored in conversations, and the various rituals in daily life. This was not a transparent, simple process. Morgan (2006) warned observers that there was more to culture than met the eye. This is why using a mix of methods, provided multiple perspectives. As Schutz (1982) explained, symbols were carriers of meaning in the process of giving meaning to life. I was attempting to decipher reality, which appeared hidden, to understand the world and share associations and images of the culture.

As Morgan (2006) described, this required observing the complex interactions between people, events, actions and general circumstances to enable a picture of the social phenomena to be created. As Kostera (2006) explained, this required uncovering what was near and dear to the social actors in both unique and isolated cases. Brewer (2000) described, 'being there' as necessary to provide both a firsthand and an insider's experience, enabling an exploration of the dynamics of social interactions as they took place. I had to see, hear and understand the actions and words of the research participants in their natural setting (Othman, 2004). Kanter (1977) developed relationships with a small group of employees from the Indsco Corporation with whom she worked closely; these people were experienced within the business with access to people from all levels. They were able to speak about the company history, their experiences within the company, and issues in their own careers (Bryman and Bell, 2003).

Although there was no formal gatekeeper, there were individuals, who were experienced in the organisation, and were able to share their insights, which were key elements in the early days of this research. As Van Maanen (1988:81) stated, '*field workers are only as good as their informants*'. There was one person in particular with whom I worked closely as part of my paid role. He was trusted and respected and had a wide network. In the early days, I found it helpful to be associated with him as I was an unknown entity. When arranging face to face interviews, being almost certified by him as being 'okay',

meant that I was someone who could be trusted, and I believed that people were more willing to engage with me. When I then met with people, I was able to reassure them that, indeed, I was someone, who could be trusted too. Their trust was imperative to this research.

I held a relatively junior role within the organisation. Although I was not a director level employee, the department, in which I worked, meant that I learnt about major changes sooner than other employees at my level. I regularly interacted with director level employees and, therefore, could obtain an inkling of what was occurring. As Kostera (2006) indicated, the directors' community was similar to the one in which I was participating. I had the common goal of achieving business objectives and was immersed in the culture of the organisation. I held this role shortly before embarking on this research. I did not enter the organisation with a view to researching it but the frustration at being unable to uncover what was going on within the organisation and the fascination with how director level social actors behaved sparked this research. Van Mannen (1988) informed us that ethnographers were creatures with a strong need for involvement in the organisation. As time elapsed within the organisation, I had a desire to fit in and progress. After observing '*how*' senior level social actors behaved over a period of time and witnessing their social processes in a naturally occurring context, I attempted to unravel clues to reveal insights into the culture, and, also, as a means for my own survival and success within this organisation. During the first two years of this research, I was amazed and shocked by the social world. As Kostera (2006) indicated, it was during this period that I gathered the most useful insights into the culture. This created a desire to uncover '*why*' they behaved as they did and how they made sense of the organisational world of which they were a part. This factor was of paramount importance but incredibly difficult to grasp. Ethnography was a way of attempting to grasp and understand this social world.

As Finlay and Ballinger (2006) stated, ethnography is a description and interpretation of a cultural world. Without this approach, interactions, and patterns of thinking, it would have been more difficult to understand people's socio-cultural behaviours, customs, beliefs, values, rituals, interactions, power relationships and general day to day lives. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) indicated, I was participating in people's daily lives, watching what was happening, listening to what was said and asking questions. Then, I was learning from them *'their view of reality'* (Agar, 1996: 163), by sharing their environment, language, rituals, rules, beliefs and background, which often were held tacitly within groups of individuals. Uncovering fragments of culture was no easy feat since the individuals were unpredictable. As Van Mannen (1988:3) stated, *'human culture is not something to be caged for display, put on a slide show for inspection, read from an instrument, or hung on the wall for viewing'*. However, Brown and Duguid (1991) highlighted that social groups revealed aspects of their culture when studied within an ethnographic manner, as ethnography was sensitive to the social conditions of work. Added to this complexity, individuals regularly carried out routine tasks and took for granted aspects of social reality, which were in fact skilful accomplishments. Garfinkle (1967) illustrated the point by discussing many social skills of which we were unaware and how these could be revealed if we behaved in our neighbour's house as if it was our own, or walked down a crowded street with random stops and turns, such actions would lead to a breakdown in the ordered normality of life. Similarly, as work was a socially organised activity, the individuals' actual behaviour often differed from how it was described by those who did it. As Fellman (1999) noted, people do not always do what they say.

This research focused on what could be labelled skilled, professional work. As Smith (2001) outlined, ethnography enabled a researcher to grasp the key features of this work, the unpredictability, variety, and the formal absence of routine. Smircich (1983) illustrated some aspects of organisational culture after sustained observation of the day to day management by a top executive group of an American Insurance company, which was part of a larger organisation. She discovered that, on the surface, the members of staff were very polite and friendly, but a 'second dimension' of the culture was that this was 'superficial at best'. At meetings, there

was polite but disinterested discourse with members of staff, who were not really getting involved or expressing an interest in what was being said. In fact, meetings were treated as ritual occasions. The public face of the organisation was quite different from the private face; many organisations said one thing and did another, operating in a 'schizophrenic fashion'. Therefore, it made it more difficult to discover 'why' people were behaving as they were.

On the other hand, Smith (2001) described jobs, which were unskilled. In this regard, ethnography was effective at revealing the tacit skills, decisions, rules, complexities, discretion and control in jobs, which had been labelled unskilled and even trivial. Researchers have used ethnographic methods to dissect how workers do their jobs. For example, the strategies employed when they faced challenges such as mechanistic failures or the necessity to take short cuts to finish their jobs on time. Similarly, Manwaring and Wood (1984) made the point about the importance of tacit skills. Many researchers have considered a range of occupations and workplaces and, particularly, have focused on craft and tacit skills as a basis for worker control and autonomy. For example, Burawoy (1979) carried out ethnographic studies on the roles of machine operators in a factory in Chicago. Similarly, Beynon (1975), over a five year period researched the Ford Motor Company's Halewood assembly plant and, subsequently, produced an account of factory life there. Finlay (1988) spoke of the tacit skills of longshoremen working after massive automation, with cab operators, after the introduction of container technology for loading and unloading ships, still having to exercise skill, initiative and concentration which were invisible to an observer. When Flowers (1998) worked as a telephone sex operator, she had to engage in extensive emotional labour to acquire the necessary tacit craft knowledge to keep clients on the telephone but, at the same time, to discourage them from becoming personally obsessed with her.

Sanday (1979) commented that ethnographers learned to use themselves as the main, most reliable instrument of observation, selection, coordination and interpretation. Communication was at the heart of ethnography as it was based on the principle that people learned from one another and helped each other through the process of learning. As Kostera (2006) suggested, I both enjoyed spending time

with interesting people and learning new things. As Rosen (1991) stated, ethnographers studied to find out more about others and themselves. If we were to consider culture as a script for those in organisations, then during everyday communications, actors, created, recreated, and interpreted the conditions by which they were able to go about the business of living. I spent time observing individuals and their interactions with colleagues and I spoke endlessly with individuals about how they made decisions about what they did and how they made sense of their world. At the same time, I carried out, also, a role and was able to experience the organisational arrangements and social relations in the workplace, which shaped experience. I had to look beyond what was being said, to understand the shared meanings, the culture, and how this was constructed by their behaviours and experiences. By having this appreciation of the 'world through their eyes', and using shared meanings, as Hochschild (1979) indicated, I was able to develop an understanding of cultural meanings and 'local rules', which were highly complex. These took into account the tacit and explicit knowledge, shown in the everyday social interactions in the workplace, and enabled me to identify the multiple perspectives and influences, which shaped the work culture within the organisation. For that reason, and in order to shed light on concepts as intangible as tacit knowledge, as Wolcott (1999) explained, I knew that emergent fieldwork methodology was required to be able to gain access to 'thoughts on knowledge'. Ethnography provided this as I had to make sense of everyday interactions, and, as Koster (2006:27) explained, to reveal the common knowledge of the social situation.

Choice of language, you and I

My post-modern view of the world meant that I recognised my presence and influence on the research and believed that it was unavoidable. I was part of my ethnographic record, and used ethnographic observations to develop a general vocabulary with which to discuss everyday interaction. I was part of the complex social phenomena of this research, and, as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) indicated, turned the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations and recordings. To a certain extent, I was fulfilling the role of an interpretative 'bricoleur' or 'maker of quilts' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Similar to a

bricoleur, I had many different roles such as researcher, employee, friend, confidant, journalist and consultant. As Levi Strauss (1966:17) indicated, I was a 'Jack of all trades', a professional 'do it yourself' piecing together a set of representations. Also, as Becker (1998) said about a bricoleur, I used whatever tools, skills, methods and materials I had at hand.

The knowledge, shared during this research, was produced by 'situated knower's' which is why I decided to use the term 'I' and it had a reflective consideration of how, my 'position' as the researcher, might have shaped the research process. Yanow and Schwartz (2006) wrote about the need for reflexivity, putting 'I' into the text and, subsequently, the researcher into the research and added, also, the need to discuss how aspects such as personality, tone of voice, class, gender and clothing shaped the research. I was attempting to construct my own reality and interpret that of the social actors as part of the setting, context and culture, which I was trying to understand and represent. As suggested by (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Gubrium and Holstein, 1997; Smyth and Shacklock, 1998), I was entangled by the politics of the social world, which I was researching.

Uncovering the cultural scenario

Uncovering the focus of the research was thrilling, but, also, very challenging as I was focusing on aspects of the culture, which were tacit and deeply embedded in the minds of the beholders. I was puzzled as to how I would gain access to this knowledge if the individuals did not even know that they had it (Polyani, 1966) and, therefore, would be unable to knowingly share it. As I learned more about the culture, some things 'just happened' and it turned out to be a fascinating place (Kostera, 2006). As Yanow (2001) suggested, broad parameters were outlined in a research strategy, although there was a definite need for improvisation. Frequently, I was trying to interpret and speculate as to what was going on. It was a process open to refinement as new elements emerged, my goal was more exploratory than evaluative. As Kostera (2006) indicated, the early days focused on aspects of the culture. This process was complex and arduous. It was not linear, messy, and not always obvious. I found it difficult to maintain belief that something would emerge.

Revealing what and how to research was challenging, as although I had a topic in mind, it was difficult to comprehend what I was observing. I began thinking about this research when I joined the company in August 2005 and I spent an extensive amount of time over the following months establishing the main themes of interest.

'I have had a very interesting day on many levels and now I am at a stage where I want someone to stick their hand into my brain and pull out one of the million ideas swimming about in there. However, as soon as I pick an idea I find something wrong with it and dismiss it almost as soon as I have picked it!' (REF: 4147 – 4150)

One of the biggest challenges in this process was 'letting go', trying not to control and guide what was being observed and participated in, and attempting to:

'Slacken the web of meanings and interpretations.... woven around perceptions of reality in order to see the world in its enormous richness of direct impressions, thus making each everyday detail amazingly fascinating' (Kostera, 2006: 51)

This identification process was not straightforward or even logical. It was about engaging with human beings, engaging in what they were telling me and what I was observing. As Yanow (2001) indicated, this required me taking action, which I could not have predicted, and required me to observe, form relationships, and record and reflect, not always simultaneously. This is shown in Figure nine below:



Figure nine: The cyclical process of uncovering the complex phenomenon

As Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Czarniawska-Joerges (1992) indicated, I consciously gathered sensory data through sight and hearing and through my observations. Whilst directors interacted with others in the organisation, I was analysing and making sense of events. I observed non-verbal behaviours such as who talked to whom and at what times since this was a valuable method of

gathering insights. I had naturally flowing informal conversations, which provided a richness of knowledge. As this research was being conducted from inside the organisation, I was exposed naturally to and participated in conversations, discussions and tensions that an external researcher would not have been. I gathered a vast amount of rich data whilst having chats over coffee, in social situations or generally whilst hanging out (Agar, 1996). Although I was an overt researcher, at times, I very much felt as if I was on the periphery looking in, like a ghost that nobody could see, floating around noticing everybody but nobody noticing me. People became so used to me being there that they let down their guards and began to trust me.

Consequently, this was very much a journey of self-discovery, which opened my eyes to multiple perspectives. It was necessary to uncover the mundane as well as the more obvious aspects of the reality construction process. As Morgan (2006) pointed out, these were often subtle and difficult to identify. I had to suspend my everyday common sense assumptions about the world and, indeed, about the future of the world, in order to feed my sociological imagination. We wear 'lenses', which cannot be removed. These enable us to view things with a different perspective. Koster (2006: 38) described this as:

'.....culture constitutes a pair of such lenses, not only because it helps us see the physical sense, but also because it is a network of meanings, in times where individuals are surrounded by complexity on a daily basis, considering viewing organisations as cultures enables us to see what is not easily seen, the cultural scenario.'

Reflecting on the research process

The research focus evolved over the years as I learned more about the reality of which I was a part, interacting and observing as I progressed. The following diagram outlines the different formal stages within the research process:

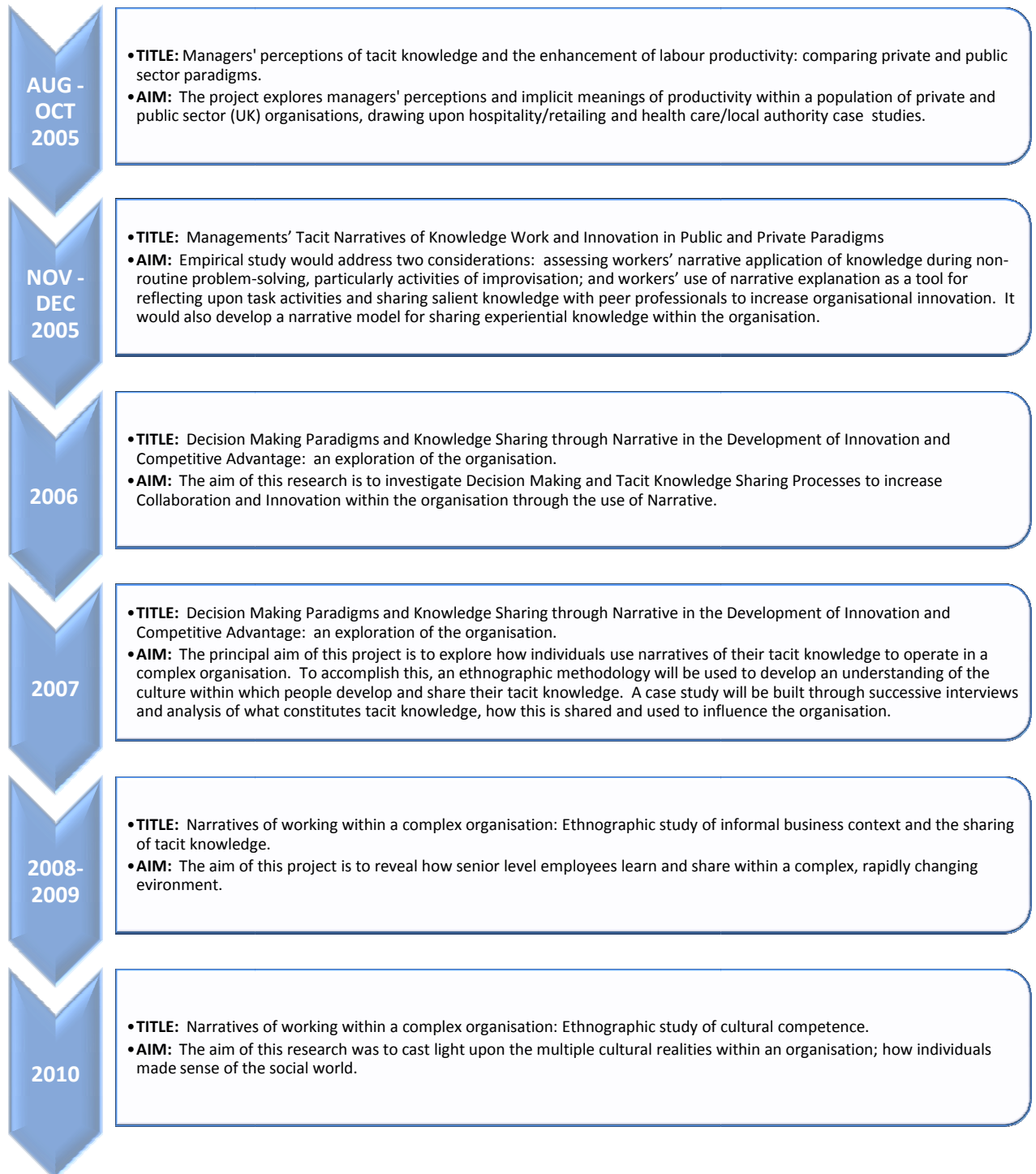


Figure ten: The research process

This research was funded by Queen Margaret University for three years. I had a defined research proposal, which was interpreted and adapted towards the end of 2005 after I became employed with the organisation which was the focus of this research. Throughout the duration of this research, I had shown always an interest in aspects of culture and tacit knowledge as a means of revealing how people learnt and shared knowledge. The early days of this research proposed making improvements within the organisational setting, on capturing information and providing solutions. Initially, I had a traditional view of organisations in that I was trying to extract and manage processes. For example, at the beginning of this research the following entry in my reflective diary captured this notion when noting how management used knowledge,

'.....management appear to combine both recorded fact (Business Intelligence) and their own thoughts (tacit knowledge comprising of their intuition, gut feeling and beliefs) when making decisions. By revealing the weighting of each element during the decision making process, and if it is uncovered that the value is in the actual combination of tacit and explicit knowledge, then this somehow must be exposed, captured and shared'. (REF: 1021)

I was keen to 'capture' and 'share', which was why there was a focus on decision making, as I thought that I could 'capture' the tacit processes. I was attempting constantly to uncover how the organisation 'worked' in the hope that I could understand and interpret it. Koster (2006) commented that ethnographers often have a topic in mind but not a particular problem relating to aspects of the studied culture, such as the decision making process. This was very much the initial focus of this research because the decision was remembered rather than the process of how it was reached. It emerged that, perhaps, as recorded in my reflective diary, the focus was sense making:

(On finding out information informally) '.... Maybe that is the question..... It is the process that management go through when making decisions, about how they gather this knowledge. A less experienced manager may not have all these informal channels, can this be overcome or is it just assumed that as a member of management that they have this tacit

knowledge as they should be experienced at this point in their career? However, it will not be of benefit to the wider business community unless they know that is there. I suppose this is where a skills database would come into play. Recording who knows what, focusing not only where they work now but which organisations they have worked for in the past (REF: 1802).

This research was still very much focused on ‘capturing’ and ‘sharing’, a very mechanistic view of the organisation; and considering how the non-formal means of knowledge transfer improved performance, specifically through narrative means. Then, it moved on to considering how individuals used tacit knowledge to operate in a complex organisation; and *how* and *when* director level employees used their tacit knowledge by describing the interactions, situations, meanings and goals. This appeared evident during the decision making process. Therefore, I had wondered initially how much reliance was placed on business intelligence (explicit knowledge) and intuition and gut feeling (tacit knowledge) during the decision making process. Actually, I was not observing and interpreting the organisation but the people within it. Again I was not attempting to interpret their decision making processes but to observe their process of making sense of the culture and how some individuals seemed not only to be able to make sense of the culture but, also, to exploit it. Sense making was clouded by decision making because I focused primarily on the decision, which had been made rather than on the process to arrive at the decision. As Weick (1995) stated, the sense making process could be implicit, tacit and dealt with both facts and feelings. It appeared to happen in socially situated ways.

However, in 2008, after an extended period of time in the organisation, gaining social competence and experiences, it appeared to me that the role of narrative was central to discovering tacit knowledge and revealing behaviours. This led on to the discovery of the notion of the cultural scenario and an eagerness to reveal how individuals made sense of the social world, of which they were part. As I became more established in the organisation, it became evident that I was intending to investigate deeply seated, subconscious values and beliefs shared by the individuals within the organisation, which were defined otherwise as culture (Lundy and Cowling, 1996). I intended to access the cognitive aspects of culture, the values and beliefs, which were tacit in nature. Significant attempts were made to

understand the informal business context. This required immersion in the culture, intertwined in the individuals' everyday activities on which this research focussed, with the aim of describing the social context, relationships and processes.

As metaphors provided multiple perspectives on the cultural scenario and the process of this research, these were used both to enlighten the research and to present its findings. Lackoff and Johnson (2003) explained the importance of metaphors since they are part of our everyday lives. They are present in our language; our thoughts and actions; the way that we think and act; and inherently so in our speech and writing. These are vehicles for understanding; play a central role in the construction of social and political reality; and are essential to human understanding as a mechanism for creating new meaning and realities. As Smircich (1983) stated, they allow us to see one thing in terms of another. The iceberg metaphor, presented by French and Bell (1984), was considered in several ways throughout the research process. The cultural scenario was revealed by going through the following stages, which, as Boje (2001) described, all required double visioning. The stages were,

- **Stage 1: Uncovering the complexities of the organisation** – The iceberg metaphor was used, at a very basic level, in considering the formal and informal aspects of the **organisation** as a whole, acknowledging, as Blau and Scott (1962) said, that there was more to the organisation than was seen on the surface. It would have been impossible to understand what was happening within the organisation without considering the informal aspects of it. Similarly, it would have been almost impossible to simply focus on the formal, explicit elements. Evident 'above the waterline' were the formal, explicit symbols such as organisational charts, job descriptions and mission statements, which provided clues about the culture. The informal aspects of the organisation such as the informal networks, communications and the values of the individuals in the organisation were considered to be 'below the waterline'. Consequently, these were difficult to uncover and required skills, gained over time, in 'reading' situations and experiences.

- **Stage 2: During the deconstruction process** – The iceberg metaphor was used to consider the ‘informal’ aspects of **individuals**. I considered that observable behaviours and artefacts, such as language and appearance, were ‘above the waterline’. Things, which could be seen and acknowledged, were the tip of the iceberg. I considered that cognitive aspects, such as values and beliefs were ‘below the waterline’, as I required ethnographic methods to reveal them.

- **Stage 3: Establishing my ontological position of organisations** - The iceberg metaphor was useful in positioning both the objective and subjective perspectives of the culture. The objective ontology was represented ‘above the waterline’, and viewed the organisational structure as a constraining force on individuals, which inhibited them and put the social phenomena beyond their reach and influence. Within the objective ontology, culture was viewed as something that was explicit, with positive repositories of values and cultures, which people learned and shared – classic ways of conceptualising organisations. However, the subjective ontology, which was demonstrated ‘below the waterline’, viewed the organisational structure as a social phenomena with the meanings being continually accomplished by social interaction and revision; and the social order continually changing with agreements being established, revised, renewed, terminated and sometimes forgotten. Culture was viewed as being tacit, with an emergent reality which was in a constant state of construction and reconstruction as new problems arose that required new understandings – meanings were constructed through interaction. This was useful in helping to consider my view of the organisation and, perhaps, how others would perceive it.

- **Stage 4: During analysis stage** – The iceberg metaphor highlighted clues which were common to those, who appeared to exploit and those, who appeared to blunder. In this regard, metaphors were attached ultimately to individuals, who were either ‘machines’ and or ‘organisms’. ‘Above the waterline’, those, who appeared to be ‘machines’ were revealed by their partial knowledge, the silo working in which they operated, and their hierarchy, structure and routine. These individuals appeared to undertake single loop learning, with defensive routines and ‘face saving’ processes to

protect them from threat as they did not have full knowledge. Therefore they were not equipped to adapt successfully and made cultural blunders. (They were not promoted, too honest, did not receive insider knowledge, and ultimately were 'side stepped' or left the business). 'Below the waterline', there were those individuals, who seemed to undertake double loop learning. They were 'organisms', who learned, adapted, and were flexible and responsive to change. It was like the survival of the fittest but this group were equipped to exploit the situation and changes. This was revealed through the cultural clues such as they had a full knowledge (or fuller knowledge) of the 'big picture', and were involved in a variety of projects, which were not necessarily part of the role that they were employed for. They had many roles, which gave them exposure. Both metaphoric groupings were revealed through stories/narrative, metaphors and language.

Social actors

As Wolcott (1991:19) described, this research regarded *'our fellow humans as people instead of subjects'*. I was merely a human, who was conducting *'research among, rather than on them'*. I deliberated for a long time about the terminology to be used to refer to the participants of this research. I was not immediately comfortable with terms like 'act' and 'actor', as I perceived them to relate to falseness or insincerity. Interestingly, as Hopfl (2002) explained, actors, in the past, were excommunicated from churches as their work was considered deceitful, morally bankrupt and hypocritical, and Wilshire (1982) described them as fraudulent beings, who hid their purposes from others, using props, costumes and gestures to manage and manipulate others. Diderot (1773) considered acting as being counterfeit for dramatic purposes, machines without a soul. Park (1950) explained that the first meaning of the word person was mask. He believed that this was recognition of the fact that everyone everywhere was more or less consciously playing a role. Given the negative connotations associated with actors, I considered other terminology such as interviewees, participants, and individuals. However, I was comfortable that 'social actor' was the most appropriate term because people adopted multiple roles and these roles within the organisational reality required portrayal from different angles to illustrate as many perspectives as possible. Through their employment, all individuals had formal roles to play, although their

social roles were not fixed. As Czarniawska-Joerges (1992:25) explained, *'every person who undertakes to play one of those roles plays it anew tentatively'*, nor were individuals given formal roles within the cultural scenario. Czarniawska-Joerges (1992) added that they got a feeling about what they were supposed to play when they acquired enough social competence in the culture. Individuals had to learn and employ emotional repertoires throughout their performances and clues could be gleaned from their demeanour and supporting gestures about their agreement with the role.

Although there were many social actors and performances within the organisation, this research focused predominantly on those who were directors and who appeared ambitious with differing levels of understanding of the rules of the game. From the preliminary observations and complex interactions, which I shared, I became more interested in this particular social group. After two years in the organisation, I found it necessary to have individual discussions with these director level employees in order to discover if my interpretations of the cultural scenario were similar to theirs and to gain multiple perspectives of the scenario. In terms of gathering a random sample, Agar (1996) stated that it would be almost impossible for an ethnographer to obtain a random sample since it would be difficult to build a rapport with individuals and, without this, the data gathered could be of poor quality. A purposeful sampling technique was adopted for this research. According to (Ezzy, 2002), a purposeful sample is selected by convenience and ease of use. Consequently, there was a selection bias in participant selection. I found it challenging and not straightforward in deciding with whom to have face-to-face interviews. I viewed what had been written about this group in company documentation and gathered background information by asking them to complete a questionnaire. Ultimately, I had to improvise as I had limited control over who was involved in the face-to-face sessions, which were dependent on their availability and willingness to participate. In addition, I could meet only those who had responded. As Yanow (2001) described, I had little leeway.

When the questionnaire was circulated to directors within the organisation, there were seventy in post with varying levels of responsibility and length of service: thirty four responded. The following individuals met for an 'interview':

Individuals with less than one year's service within the organisation	Individuals with between one and five year's experience within the organisation	Individuals with over five year's experience within the organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non director - Martha • Directors - Patricia, Martin and Robert. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non directors - Judy and Rebecca • Directors - Graham, Rick, Jack and Sarah 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non director - Jim • Directors - Pete, Ken, Malcolm and Barbara

Figure eleven: Categorisation of social actors

I arranged the questionnaire responses based on their length of service and further categorised them based on their level of responsibility, area of work and gender. Based on these criteria, I invited twelve individuals to be interviewed: all agreed. However, one of the executive directors, whom I was scheduled to meet, had left the organisation before the interview could take place. Consequently, only eleven interviews took place. They had:

1. Varying lengths of service. This was chosen as the main differentiator since the existing organisation was born out of the acquisition of another business before this research began. I hoped to gather insights and perspectives of how individuals perceived the organisation and how their length of service and experiences impacted upon this. Therefore, the senior level actors comprised some from the original organisation prior to the acquisition; some from the current organisation and some, who were new to the organisation.
 - *Less than one year's service:* Social actors, who were new to the organisation, new to the culture and the way of doing things.
 - *Between one and five year's service:* Social actors, who had no attachment to the 'original' organisation, which was acquired since they joined the organisation by which time it was in its new formation.

- *Over five year's*: Social actors, who were part of the original organisation and the new organisation.
2. Varying levels of responsibility, executive director to account director.
 3. Roles in different areas of the organisation, functional to support areas.
 4. Gender - Those in charge of the organisation were predominantly male. As Gilligan (1993) indicated, it appeared to be dominated and shaped by male value systems, with even the females acting like males.

Each grouping included one female senior level social actor. All categories were selected to uncover multiple realities based on their experiences, perceptions and interpretations of the organisation; to provide a cross sectional partial description of a group; and to identify common threads in informal culture, sharing of knowledge and social relationships between senior level employees.

Prior to meeting each director, I conducted four pilot interviews. One was carried out within the early stages of the fieldwork in order to explore thoughts in the area, and proved useful in guiding ideas. This took place after I had been one year in the organisation and was carried out purely because of circumstances since this individual was leaving the business for a short period and I had to take the opportunity to speak to her before she departed. All of these pilot interviews were carried out with non director level social actors, categorised in the same way as the director level employees. I planned these initial interviews to ensure that I was comfortable with the technique because I was not entirely confident in my ability and, also, I was unsure what might arise during the course of these conversations. These interviews allowed me to gain perspective on the process and, afterwards, I captured this reflection in my diary, which reads:

'There is no denying that I am very much a people person. I love communicating with people and finding out all about them and I hadn't realised before, but this is more or less what an interview is. I had been too hung up with the formalities and right and wrong things to do when conducting one, that I had almost lost sense of the purpose' (REF: 5541 – 5554)

This sense of perspective stood me in good stead for the subsequent interviews and made me realise that these pilot interviews were not for 'practice' as the social actors' experiences were real and absolutely worthwhile. It would have been an injustice to treat the views they shared with me any differently to those given in later interviews. These pilot interviews provided a vast richness of information, which meant that I had to share their stories alongside my own and those of the director level social actors.

I had prior knowledge of and relationships with some of the social actors, whom I interviewed formally (although I attempted to be informal in a formal setting); some of the others I had observed, and I had never met some before. The face sheet (see appendix 1), which I had developed, with information collated from responses to the questionnaire, meant that I had some stimulus to initiate conversation if required. Before beginning the recording, I spent at least ten minutes having a general chat in an attempt to put the individuals at their ease and build rapport where there was none previously. Also, the research setting was important, and I recorded my deliberations and decisions in choosing the locations since these had an impact on how the social actor and I behaved.

Tools utilised to uncover the cultural scenario

I participated in the daily lives of people for an extended period of time, watching what happened, listening to what was said, asking questions, collecting documents and artefacts, and gathering whatever data was available to throw light on the issues, which emerged as a focus of inquiry. I employed an array of interconnected qualitative interpretative practices and techniques to enable me to understand the social phenomena. These were flexible enough to allow me to take advantage of the routine and problematic moments and meanings in the individuals' lives, and to explore the socio-cultural experience. I was able to look at the same problem from a number of viewpoints, which was an excellent way to verify the interpretation and conclusions.

Reflexivity

I adopted a critical self reflection approach to reduce potential biases since I was aware that my views were flawed because these came with my own 'baggage'. This enabled me to provide an account of how I came about telling the stories of others in my own words. Also, I was keen to reflect upon the social processes, which impinged upon and influenced the data. I observed everything and took many field notes, which later became the basis of my reflective diary. I was careful not to name either the organisation or any individuals with whom I had interacted and observed subsequently. My diary was personally important to me and this is outlined in the following entry:

'I have been very busy and learning lots, but when it comes down to hard evidence, there is very little. That is why I am glad that I keep this diary as it provides sanity and a reminder that I have been busy and productive. It also provides a form of escapism. Although it takes me sometime to motivate myself to begin a diary entry – perhaps because it makes me face things that I try to hide from – when I start writing, there is a sense of freedom and a feeling of ownership, this is my place where I can throw things about and it doesn't matter if it is right or wrong' (REF: 3760 – 3767).

It is interesting to note how I discussed the need for 'hard evidence' and 'right and wrong'. It is apparent that I still had quite an objective view point at this time. My diary was my space and entries were more than just observations of the social setting. They were a mechanism for capturing my emotions, such as the desire to be recognised, included and liked within the organisation and commonly the aftermath after these needs were not realised. I never worried about the language that I used, the grammar, sentence structure or anything else other than what I had observed, how I was feeling and some views on what I thought it all meant. It was a wonderful experience that I missed when I stopped making entries after leaving the organisation; when I no longer had a crutch to help me to complete the thesis. Also, it enabled me to keep a note of my interactions as a researcher as well as acting as a continual source of introspection. It guarded me against making premature

assumptions about what was happening and tracked evolving concepts and complex ideas, which, as Schuktze (2000) said, showed that the 'rules' of ethnography were followed. Although, at the beginning of the research, I made entries every day, eventually I only made entries when I had something important to say such as:

'This is the beauty of this diary, I start off with no clear idea of what I want to say or where I want to go, and before long I have talked through the things that are floating about in my head, often unknown to me, until something triggers them. Many eureka moments occur during this process, which is fabulous! When I am reflecting, I am like a narrator in a film, watching everything that is going on and commenting on what I see and how I perceive the situation to be. However, like any good film, there are many twists and turns and things may not be at all like I think they are. But then if you think about the many realities and truths, who are to say that mine are wrong?' (REF: 3831 – 3841).

I appeared to be gaining an understanding that there were multiple realities and truths. I discussed many ideas in the diary, which helped focus my thoughts. It not only captured my story, but that of others:

'Whilst writing this diary I am aware that I switch often from my narrative to that of others, but that is real life, it is messy and entangled. Narrative uncovers the value, the key points, the tacit knowledge.' (REF: 839 – 841)

Although I considered the general reflective approach of my diary was absolutely necessary, I did have some concerns as shown in the following entry:

'My diary is helping me greatly as I am able to capture thoughts that otherwise I would forget all about days later. I am also able to tell my story and those of others, often they weave in and out of each other..... However, I must add that this does not come without any concerns. I feel as if I am putting myself out on the line as previously my work has been 'safe', but now is the time to live a little dangerously I think!' (REF: 918 – 926)

This was a real concern since I was not comfortable being 'out there' or letting go. I was unable to read over my diary until the analysis stage. At the time, I simply recorded, and by doing so, reflected and moved on, leaving behind my baggage to be unpacked at a later date. Interestingly, for the first year, it was important to me that I wrote the diary by hand. There was something very therapeutic and thought provoking about this. However, there came a point when my entries began to flow and it was no longer practical to record in this way. I processed the written diaries and then began recording electronically.

When it came to revisiting the diary, I found the unpacking process difficult. It felt good reflecting on how hard I had worked, and whilst it was interesting looking at my own feelings and experiences, I felt quite sad realising how low I had been at times, although it was good reading the triumphs along with the defeats. At times, some of the entries were so vivid that I could imagine 'being there' again. The sheer amount of time, which had passed, was quite frightening; it captured key life events such as getting engaged, birthdays, buying my first home. It was all there to see.

Also, the side effects of the research process were clear to see upon reflection, as shown by the following entry:

'I genuinely do not switch off. I have been really uptight recently and this has shown when I have been sleeping. I have only just got over the grinding my teeth during the night phase..... Now I have a stiff neck which is killing me and apparently I was repeatedly talking in my sleep last night. I wake up and I am shattered because I have such restless sleep, this is no good as when it comes to working I just want to crawl into a ball and sleep for a week!' (REF: 3697 – 3704), and on my recurring cold, 'I feel as if my cold is coming back which would probably be right given how I am feeling right now' (REF: 3921 – 3923).

As well as my relationship with the research in general as shown by the following entry:

I just realised today whilst struggling with my PhD that it has been treated like an illness for the last year! I have not wanted to think or speak about it as it caused me a lot of upset. Most people would be asked 'how are the kids', I get asked 'how's the PhD' and as time passed, it progressed into the sympathetic 'cancer voice' as if it was eating away at me, this sympathetic tone was used when people were concerned about me but were not sure what to say. I have come to realise that this is a relationship like any other in my life and it has to be worked at. I am unfamiliar with it at the moment and am going to have to reacquaint myself with it, but this is what I am trying to do (REF: 6266 – 6274).

Once I arrived at the analysis stage, things were revealed that, perhaps, were not obvious at the time. I attributed this to my ability to view things dispassionately as I had moved on and, after some months, I had come to terms with the redundancy. It was particularly interesting to note how relationships had evolved over time; how trust had been established; and the impact that other people had on me at certain points during the research. This was not only my relationship with them, but theirs with me. People would confide in me, comfortably chat about their personal lives and ask my personal opinion on business matters. This was a massive change from when I began as a new member of staff some two years previously. I had not noticed particularly until the analysis stage how I had changed over time as an employee and as a researcher. My diary recorded all thoughts on research and almost served as an audit trail on how I arrived at my conclusions. Interestingly, it also tracked my relationship with the job; from being really passionate to being detached. It revealed a lot about my nature, how I was still striving to do well even although at times I was very miserable. I acted as a barometer for all of the changes that took place within the organisation, recording the departures of directors and the five different managers, who passed through my department. As Van Maanen (1988) described, the diary and field notes adopted a confessional style; it was a self-revealing, self-reflexive account of the research process, and, as Elliott and Jankel-Elliott (2003) described, recorded the cognitive and emotional

experience of the fieldwork. As such, self-reflexive material was combined with ethnographic material to achieve cultural critique.

The questionnaire, asking questions

I required a method, which would provide background information about the social actors of this research. Therefore, I developed a questionnaire, which was circulated amongst all director level social actors. However, to be able to issue this, I had to 'piggy back' onto an existing study, which was underway within the organisation. The questionnaire was a blend of questions for both my aims and that of the organisation. I was up front about the use of the data, which was being collected, informing potential respondents explicitly on what information would be used to contribute to the organisation's exercise and what information would be used for my research.

Actually, it was very challenging to obtain permission to circulate this questionnaire,

'I had to draft my questionnaire seven times as my new line manager kept coming back with amendments. To get the questionnaire submitted in the first instance, I had to combine mine with a questionnaire that he was going to submit to the same group of people. Participants were informed of the dual purpose in the introductory email and that what they sent back would potentially be used in my study and that a cross section of them would be contacted for interviews. After the questionnaire was sent out, my new line manager admitted that the reason he had been so hesitant was because he thought that our manager would have forbidden the questionnaire to be distributed to director level employees'.
(REF: 5315 – 5321)

Politics were clearly a barrier to accessing the wider population of senior level actors. At times, I thought my access was going to be restricted but, finally, I received permission to submit the collaborative questionnaire. It was a fixed format self-completion determinant-choice questionnaire to ascertain the opinions of senior level social actors.

The language used within this questionnaire was basic and did not require specialised knowledge, with the aim of not limiting the number of respondents. The main purpose of the questionnaire was to provide some insight into each social actor's knowledge and views before inviting them for interview. The responses were used to provide background information on each social actor to aid the relationship building process during the in-depth narrative interview, I was aware that it took time to build up a relationship with each social actor. Having this background information enabled me to establish common ground and to develop a relationship more quickly, which contributed to creating a relaxed atmosphere when the social actor was able to provide a richer, open narrative, if they desired.

One-to-one pre-arranged sessions

I did not record daily conversations with individuals. The main reason for this was that individuals appeared wary of discussing issues openly when recorded. Therefore, recording would have had a negative impact upon the relationships, which had been established. My strategy for collecting data relied on unstructured interviews and informal interviews with individuals. I considered that it was more important to build relationships so that I could converse with the individuals and observe them over time as opposed to the importance of capturing exactly their spoken words.

Occasionally, I took handwritten notes and, normally, the outcomes of these conversations were discussed in my reflective diary. Often these would stimulate me throughout the research and one such example read:

'As I walked back into the building, two men were walking towards me when they stopped to chat to another man. As I reached them, I heard them say 'what do you have on.....', I cannot remember what they were asking for information on, I think that is because I was so focused on the fact that I heard them ask 'what they had on.....', meaning, what information do you personally have on that specific subject, or what do

you know about that specific subject..... It was quite funny how I was walking past the men, full of doom and gloom and then like a dog that had spotted something of interest, my ears perked up when I heard those words. This typifies my experiences throughout the course of my time as an employee. I am normally going about my day-to-day business, getting on with my job and then something occurs that grabs my interest in relation to my research. I could not get that man's words out of my head' (REF: 3794 – 3815).

In order to clarify the thoughts gathered and to delve further beneath the surface, I carried out narrative interviews. Although I have referred to them as interviews, which suggest formality, they were more relaxed and informal. They were used to explore the rationale for the aspects of culture, which had been observed over the two year period, by which point I could speak to the directors in a commonly understood language in the hope that they would share their values, routines, symbols and stories. As explained by Davenport and Prusak (2000), Denning (2005) and Durance (1998), stories played a role in enabling *'people to express and comprehend the sticky, context rich aspects of deep rich knowledge more effectively'*. Bruner (1991) and Ruggles (2002) saw narrative as a vehicle through which people expressed meanings and from which others attempted to extract meaning. This narrative approach was valuable in this qualitative research (Cassell and Symon, 1994), as it provided deep and rich information (Light and Pillemer, 1984). I found that the in-depth narrative interviews helped to capture the detail of the social actor's perspectives and experiences. I based the choice of conversation style on early interactions with the social group as I observed and experienced the differences between the social actors' reaction to direct questioning compared to more open, informal narrative conversation. This led me to the decision that narrative was a suitable technique to adopt in all interactions with social actors and I elicited many narratives and heard much during the field work, often in naturally occurring conversations. I adopted this approach for the one to one face to face sessions and narrative interviews. These were carried with the aim of allowing the social actors to express their emotions, thoughts and interpretations by discussing dilemmas, frustrations, routines, and relationships, which were part of their everyday lives. I believed that ordinary people's oral narratives of everyday experience were worthy of study in themselves. For the purpose of this research, I viewed narrative as a way of understanding my own and others' actions. It was a way of organising events and objects in a wholly meaningful way and of seeing the consequences of

actions over time (Gubrium and Holstein 1997; Hinchman and Hinchman, 2001; Laslett, 1999).

Based on the questionnaire responses, I created open-ended, non-directive questions about how they perceived themselves and how they interacted within the organisation. These were designed as *'triggers that stimulate the social actor into talking about a particular broad area'* (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 113). I used open ended questions more to encourage the telling of stories (Riessman, 1993), and used probing questions to bring out the depth of experiences related to tacit knowledge and culture and to fill in specific information gaps. This allowed the social actor to speak freely and not be confined to answering direct questions in the hope that a natural narrative would emerge. I had an informal schedule aimed broadly at covering two main areas, knowledge sharing and learning, in the hope that these conversations would instigate narratives about the culture of the organisation. However, the social actors guided the agenda by the extent of their enthusiasm for topics. A benefit of this open ended approach was that it led the social actors into unforeseen areas. Often a story would take us off the track and provide more interesting insights into the organisation.

During the 'pilot' phase, I encountered a problem similar to that experienced by Czarniawska (1997) in her work 'Narrating the Organisation'. I was asking the social actors to generalise and soon realised that they were disrupting my interview schedule. This concerned me until I discovered that they were in fact writing their own schedule. This was absolutely fine and, in fact, the point of the conversation. During the discussion, the interest was in the social actor's point of view, rather than a reflection of my own concerns. Consequently, I had to allow the social actors to talk about what was important to them: this was part of me learning to let go. The social actors were encouraged to discuss life beyond their role within the organisation. They did not discard their cultural values, lifestyle preferences and identities when they went to work and their feelings ought not to be disregarded. The narrative interviews typically involved short stories about particular events and characters, and, occasionally, stories about significant times in their lives such as

schooling, marriage, as well as narratives of their entire lives (Chase, 2005), which were very revealing.

I could not go into the interview situation pretending not to have any knowledge of these individuals, either directly or indirectly, nor could I pretend to have no insider knowledge of the organisation. This knowledge proved beneficial when striking up conversations as I was able to relate my questioning to examples within the organisation, which, without having been an employee, I would never have gained access to, and there would have been a fundamental gap in my understanding. The nature of the knowledge, which I was aiming to reveal, was tacit and describing this knowledge was difficult. My role, as interviewer, was to help the social actor describe this knowledge and, as Sveiby (2001) stated, enable it to be shared through dialogue and debate. Each interview varied in length from half an hour to one hour (although in two extreme cases they lasted between one and a half and two hours).

I aimed to develop meaning out of my own voice and realities as well as that of others. It was important that all interviews were carried out over the same time frame (during August 2007) since the organisation was going through a period of significant change and the way it operated was due to be altered drastically. I wanted to ensure that all the participants told their stories within the same period before change impacted on the group as a whole, i.e. the fate of the organisation had not been decided at that time but was due to be concluded by the end of 2007. The dramatic changes, which had begun, were evident and were reflected in the number of directors, who were leaving the organisation (either being asked to leave or leaving of their own accord). Not all changes were communicated. For example, I only heard about an executive director leaving after I received from his personal assistant a cancelled appointment message in my email box with no accompanying note.

It was interesting to note the directors' differing approaches to the interview. Some ate their lunch; others would answer their blackberry telephones; and some would

put their telephones off. My aim for these interviews was to encourage them to be as informal as possible. The role of 'small talk' was an important one, and at least ten minutes prior to recording was spent chatting informally. This was important in attempting to relax both myself and the social actor in conversation. Two non verbal aspects were crucial to creating the relaxed atmosphere; the first related to my dress code. When the interviews took place, I was not being paid by the organisation to carry out any work related activities. However, I was dressed as I would be normally during the course of my working day. I deemed this important since I did not wish to stand out and look different from the way I would normally in this setting. I perceived this as a possible barrier in the interviews and I wanted to look the same as always, which was less formal than the majority of other social actors. It was never my intention to deceive them, I simply did not want my appearance to detract from our conversations. The second conscious prop, which I provided, was a cup of tea. I would invite them, also, to have refreshment, trying to create an environment, which would lend itself to an informal conversation rather than a formal question and answer session. These non-verbal props might not have worked in a different situation but they suited my personality and the prevailing situation, which only came about after I had gained a shared understanding of the cultural scenario. In line with phenomenology, I considered that the establishment of a good level of rapport and empathy was critical to gaining detailed information, especially since I had a good deal at stake in investigating these issues.

I had to abide by the organisation's social rules and, consequently, the interviews had to take place on the premises and were organised like any other meeting. The organisation had a culture of holding meetings regularly and I had to use the (Microsoft Outlook) business tools, to arrange, often with their Personal Assistants, the interviews with the social actors. The interviews were carried out in the organisation's meeting rooms, which, in themselves, characterised the culture of the organisation. Before beginning the interview, I completed a 'pre-interview' form (see example in Appendix 2), adapted from Bryman and Bell (2003), which recorded my thoughts and preconceived ideas about the interview. Similarly, as soon as the interview ended, I completed a 'post interview' form (see example in Appendix 3), again adapted from Bryman and Bell (2003). It enabled me to reflect upon my technique as well as to capture any key thoughts as soon as the

interview had ended. At times, I felt as if my role was that of a researcher and therapist, (Kostera, 2006), and this had emerged during the pilot stage. I did not expect this and made the following entry in my reflective diary:

'Both ladies that I interviewed commented in some way that made me feel like a counsellor/shrink type person because I was delving around in areas that were at times persona, I was not just asking them about their job role but about them, the person behind the role' (REF: 3432).

When the occasion arose to discuss personal issues, it was not always easy to stay detached because of my nature. However, I had to make a conscious effort not to become involved. Although she alluded to it at the beginning, Patricia shared a particularly sensitive story at the end of our interview. This was particularly revealing and, therefore, has been omitted but mentioned purely to highlight the role of councillor that I took on unwittingly.

I had a robust process for managing the accounts given at interviews. I recorded the interviews using a digital recorder and followed the steps below:

- I transferred recordings from the recorder on to my personal computer. Each participant was given a 'social actor name', later this was altered when social actors were given pseudonyms.
- I copied each recording to DVD and sent it to be transcribed by a trustworthy person with a proven track record, external to both the organisation and my university.
- DVDs were returned with the transcripts. Then, I listened to the recordings and compared them with the transcripts to ensure that what was said during the interview had been recorded accurately during the transcription process.
- Then, the social actors received a copy of their transcript and I asked if they believed that it captured accurately the conversation, which we had on the day. Also, I asked if they had any comments, which they wished to add upon

reflection as I wanted to discover how they felt about the information, which they provided, as well as the information itself.

Ethical considerations, duty of care to those involved

Protecting social actors from harm was of utmost importance throughout this study and I incorporated many mechanisms to ensure that this was achieved. Diener and Crandall (1978) broke down the main issues in relation to ethical principles and these were considered throughout this study:

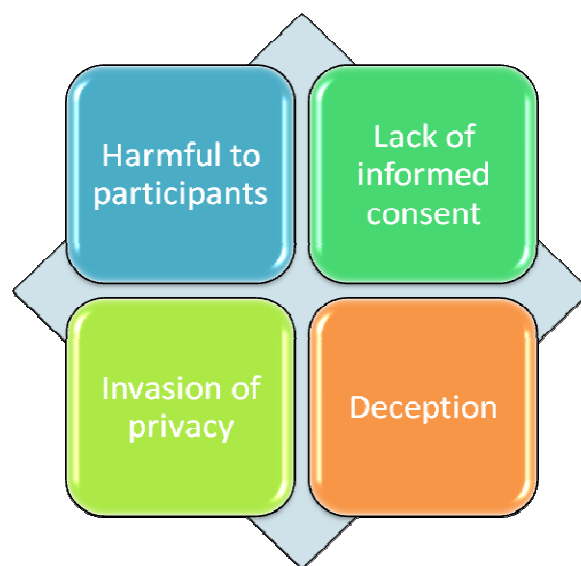


Figure twelve: Ethical considerations

I gave careful consideration throughout the entire course of this research to ensure that nothing was revealed about the identity of the social actors, or the content of their interviews or responses to the questionnaire. I was sensitive to balancing fact finding with intruding on highly emotive issues, which could upset the social actors. I ensured all the social actors of confidentiality throughout the study and decided to omit the name of the organisation under study in order to reduce further the likelihood of the social actors being identified. Many social actors were reluctant to engage in conversation once I informed them that I would like to record our

conversations. However, all agreed, although some appeared more comfortable than others, once I assured them that:

- their names would be protected by using pseudonyms;
- the identity of the organisation would be withheld;
- they would receive a copy of their transcript and, if desired, could comment on it; and
- no other member of staff in the organisation would see their transcript, or know that they had participated in an interview, including the other social actors who had done so.

Also, I explained to all potential participants in my introductory email, inviting them to complete the questionnaire, that by agreeing to complete the questionnaire and being interviewed, they were agreeing to participate in this research. It was difficult to convey to all the social actors what I was researching as they did not understand totally the terms 'tacit knowledge' and 'culture'. Therefore, always, I ensured that they understood these terms. I kept the transcripts secure in order to ensure that their privacy was protected. I was upfront with the social actors and careful to present my research, as accurately as possible, by encouraging their questions to avoid any ambiguities.

When interpreting the text I ensured that I did the following:

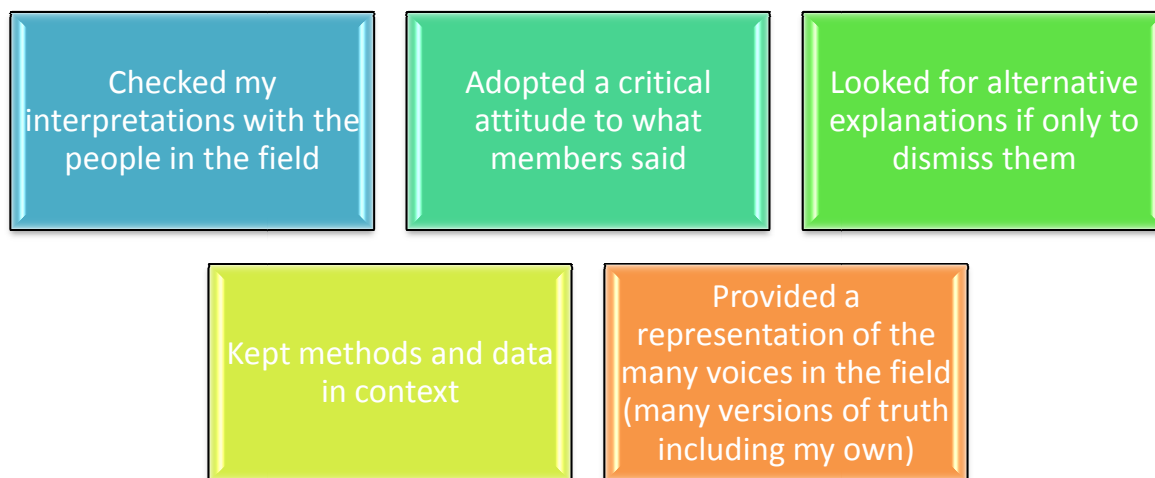


Figure thirteen: Uncovering meaning

I increased the validity of the data by giving the social actors the opportunity to agree the transcripts of their interviews (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Rather than giving a high priority to the principle of prediction, generalisation and superficiality, I was concerned with the more fundamental issues of meaning and the processes through which organisational life was possible (Smircich, 1983). My focus was on interpreting and deciphering the patterns of symbolic action, which created and maintained a sense of organisation. Language and shared realities were open for reinterpretation and renegotiation as these were not static (Smircich, 1983). Similar to Goffman's approach to analysis, I wanted to establish a (loose) 'frame of reference' rather than a 'theory' in the explanatory sense. I attempted to bring together a variety of observations under the aegis of some internally coherent pattern, and provide the particular frame of reference. In order to 'validate' the 'truth claims' of my analysis I will persuade you, the reader, of the quality of my work, and present a fuller understanding of the process. In my explanation of this, I have tried to be as transparent as possible. I have outlined broadly the times of the day, the days of the week, the dates and the times of the year, when I conducted this research, in a way, which Yanow and Schwartz (2006) called the Dates, Days and Times (DDT) of the project.

Time and duration in the field: August 2005 to May 2008 - Key Dates	
August 2005	I was employed as a Knowledge Officer, a part-time, temporary post, 16 hours per week, normally over two days a week. However, through choice, I always worked more hours unpaid. This role came about after I was interviewed for the advertised full-time post of Knowledge Manager. I was unable to accept this post as I had been awarded a scholarship to begin my PhD. With this in mind, I informed them at my interview that I could no longer be considered for this post but asked if I could carry out work experience within the organisation. I offered to carry out this work unpaid. A short while later, I was offered a paid, part-time post, which I accepted. This relatively insignificant role allowed me to immerse myself in the organisation and to begin formulating ideas on this research. Also, over time, it enabled me to learn how to behave in the organisation; to analyse behaviour and language; to work out how and when to behave formally and informally; to learn technical terms; what constituted humour; and attitudes and values.
January 2006	After six months I had completed my first project, which required me to work more than my contracted hours to complete it. This had taken a lot out of me emotionally and mentally but I enjoyed it so much I realised that I had not been able to focus on formulating my research proposal because I was so focused on completing my project, whilst striving to uncover the inner workings of the organisations to do so. I was offered and accepted the opportunity to leave the organisation for a short while to concentrate on formulating my ideas for this research.
February 2006	I started my reflective diary.
June 2006	Having taken time away to reflect and refocus I rejoined the organisation.
August 2006	The first scoping pilot interview took place, was transcribed and returned, and probing possible themes occurred.
June 2007	After several revisions, I issued joint questionnaires. Half of all the directors responded.
June 2007	After several managers, a steep learning curve, desire to develop and be recognised and months of not having my psychological contract fulfilled, I was offered a permanent role and new job title. During this journey, many team members moved on and, soon, I became one of the longer serving employees who had built up some expertise in certain areas. Therefore, I was a

	reference point for many new colleagues. Two years service in this organisation was considered a long time.
July 2007	3 pilot interviews took place.
August - September 2007	11 interviews took place. Normally, for each interview I would be in the organisation for at least three hours, one hour prior, during and after the interview.
August 2007	A major change was announced.
October – December 2007	I returned the transcripts of the interviews to the social actors for comment.
May 2008	<p>Whilst I am not entirely sure at which point this occurred, I did become part of the organisation. I had gone native, the strange had become familiar and what was qualitative research had become everyday life.</p> <p>Shortly afterwards, this journey ended quite harshly when the organisation was acquired and the whole business function, of which I was part, was made redundant. The majority of my team left at the beginning of April, I was one of the few that stayed on until the end of May; seeing it through until the end.</p>
Observations and informal conversations were a continual process throughout these years.	

Table one: Significant events throughout the research

Within this interpretative research, objectivity was impossible. The social realities were socially and inter-subjectively constructed, given that my knowledge was based on personal and collective prior knowledge. It is a representation of what I believed to be true; my experiences were categorised in ways that made sense to me in order for me to function and interpret this culture (Lackoff and Johnson, 2003). I generated knowledge in an interactive way within the observations and interviews, and interpretations (Geertz, 1973) which, also, took place when analysing documents (Yanow and Schwartz, 2006). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested authenticity and trustworthiness were ways of assessing and establishing the quality of qualitative data. This research was authentic in that it was fair in considering the viewpoints of a group of social actors within one organisation. Trustworthiness was essential within this research. I had to assure social actors of this before many

would allow me to record our conversations. As shown in Figure fourteen below, I used Lincoln and Guba as a guide:

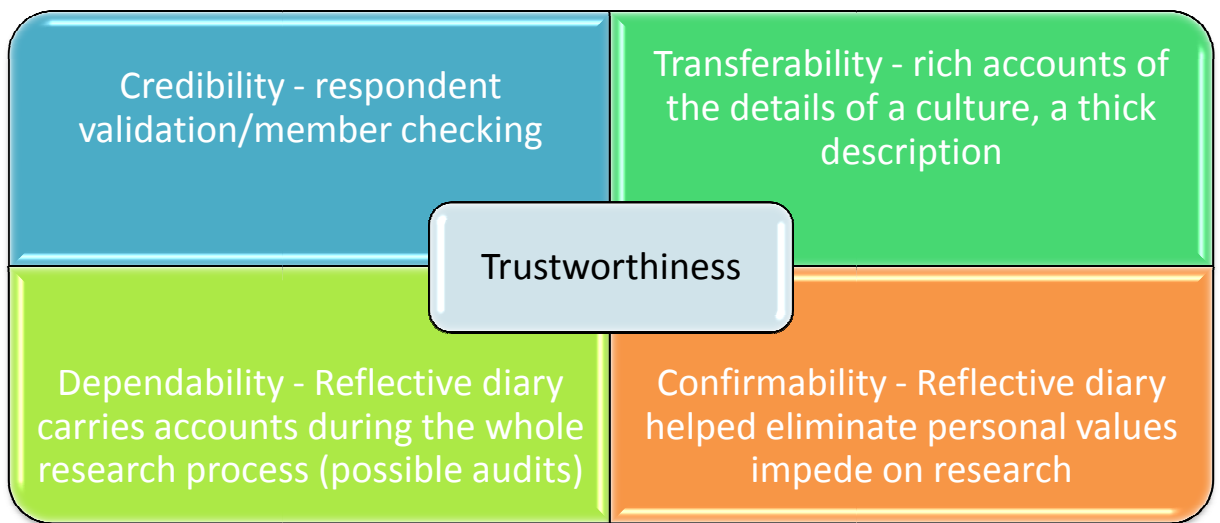


Figure fourteen: Trustworthiness

Being an interpretive study, I acknowledged that I was part of the world being studied and not external to it (Boyle, 1994). Furthermore, as I was working in the organisation, which I was researching, I had to consider how my own presence might influence findings. I had preconceptions and bias, which meant that it was important to make it clear what interpretations and meanings had been placed on the findings, and showed that I was a subjective actor in being present in this research. However, ethnographic research was no different from all other types of research in that it had to meet standards of objectivity (Kirk and Miller 1986). Therefore, I had to find ways to balance subjectivity and objectivity (Shapiro 1997). I aimed to be robust in indicating the presence of factors and their influence on this research but was reluctant to suggest how these related to the general population. Although conformity was a consideration, I was aware of this and acknowledged any potential bias through recording them in my reflective diary and, ultimately, I avoided overpowering the social actors (Fine and Weiss, 1998). It was always at the forefront of my mind when interacting with social actors. My unique perspective and closeness to knowledge, which was revealed within the organisation, offset any disadvantage of ethnographic research.

As Kluckhohn, (1940:331) explained, the purpose of social actor observation is to:

'obtain data about behaviour through direct contact and in terms of specific situations in which the distortion that results from the investigator's being an outside agent is reduced to a minimum'

These observations were stored in my reflective diary for careful analysis after the event.

Although it has been said that measures of reliability were inappropriate in an ethnographic study since these could not be replicated (Snjek, 1990), I recorded descriptions of the fieldwork in this research to enable the reader to recreate and interpret the fieldwork and compare it to my interpretation. Owing to the phenomenological ontology of this research, the detailed comments on individual situations did not lend themselves to generalisation. Although short in scope, this is compensated by the sheer scale and complexity of data collected. I was unable to go back to the organisation to obtain their reactions on my interpretations since it existed no longer in that form. It was impossible to identify typical cases, which could be used to represent certain locations, people or events. Therefore, I generated concepts and gave meaning to abstract elements of the organisation (Bryman and Bell, 2003). I considered plausibility during the 'write up' phase (Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Van Maanen, 1995 and Denzin, 1997). I wrote this research in a structured way with specific headings and the use of citations and presented a justification for this research and its contribution. As this research was conducted in a single setting, I put forward arguments to convince the reader that the study was relevant to organisational research as a whole rather than to one specific organisation. Cultural critique (Marcus and Fischer, 1986) meant using this research to reflect not only on the social actor's world but, more importantly, on the researcher's world (Golden-Biddle and Locke 1993). Cultural critique suggested that the purpose of an ethnographic study was to understand not only the social actors of this research but, also, ourselves in new and improved ways. In order to achieve cultural critique, I captured in my reflective diary not only events within the organisation but, also, my thoughts on personally having experienced these events. At times, these experiences, recollections of what I observed and interpreted, and what I was told by others, were entered in my reflective diary retrospectively

(Kostera, 2006). My personal experiences in the organisation were an important aspect of ethnography.

Interpreting the cultural scenario, making sense of what was uncovered

To recap, I collected the data from a variety of sources, as shown in Figure fifteen figure below.



Figure fifteen: Data sources

For the purpose of this research, I defined my analysis as *'the process of bringing order to the data, organising what is there into patterns, categories and descriptive units, and looking for relationships between them'* (Brewer, 2000: 105). Berg (1998) commented that analysis was not an exact science. However, this was not to say that it could not be carried out methodically with general standards in place. The

sheer voluminous and complex nature of the data, which I collected through a variety of mechanisms, was messy and did not fall into neat categories. There were many ways in which I could have linked the different discussions and observations. Consequently, I had to undertake skilful analysis to bring order and structure to the data to enable it to be interpreted.

Similar to the experience of Mangham (2005), who, after three months of intensive involvement with actors, singers and musicians, was left with a mass of data and little clear idea of what to do with it, and was facing '*research immersion, and he had very nearly drowned*' (2005:951); I felt the same. Fetterman (2010) in his Step by Step Guide to Ethnography explained that it was about telling a credible, rigorous and authentic story, and giving voice to people in their own context. This required a reliance on verbatim quotations and descriptions. My role was to adopt a cultural lens to interpret the behaviours being observed during the daily patterns of human thought and behaviour. As Smircich (1983) described, the culture being studied was conceived as patterns of symbolic discourse. This research aimed to explore the phenomenon of the organisation as subjective experience and to investigate the patterns that made organised action possible. These patterns required interpreting (Manning, 1979), 'reading' (Turner, 1983) or deciphering, (Van Maanen, 1973), in order to be understood. They painted a complex and multifaceted picture of the various kinds of symbol systems and meanings. Therefore, several types of evidence were required. Ethnography was a surreal attempt to shuffle and reshuffle realities. Consequently, I had to devise an appropriate method of presenting these realities for interpretation: a method which would focus on depth, not breadth of understanding, and would allow me to build a picture of the social phenomena, taking into account background and unique and isolated cases.

Culture was self-organising and always evolving but patterns could be revealed to help make sense of what was happening within the culture (Morgan, 2006). These patterns represented the symbolic discourse, which specified the links between the values, beliefs and actions within the organisation (Smircich, 1983), by highlighting tacit and/or explicit cultural themes and revealed understandings, which encouraged social activity (Opler, 1945). There were many ways to analyse the social actors,

who talked about their experiences (Spradley, 1979; Taylor and Bogdan, 1984 and Mahrer, 1988). With regard to the material gathered during this ethnographic study, it had to be interpreted in a creative way in order to bring something novel into the understanding of what had been studied. As Proust (cited in Kostera, 2006) said, *'...the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes'*. However, I struggled to find a way of presenting this to others. Initially, I adopted a data analysis process put forward by Huberman and Miles (1998: 180) as in Figure sixteen:

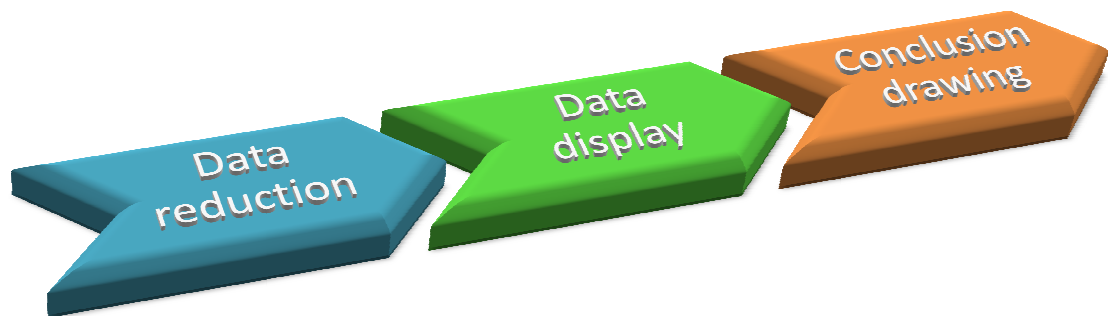


Figure sixteen: Data analysis

These steps involved initially organising the data into controllable sections by simply reading through it and trying to uncover themes in what people had said. I ended up with collections of quotations, which, in isolation, added no value and, therefore, had to be grouped into themes. As Morgan (2006) described, to form the storylines, I had to prioritise the insights gained when reading the transcripts, bringing together multiple insights into a coherent pattern. Stories were created jointly through conversation and collected for interpretation and analysis. The interpretation took place to reveal what the social actors had said and I analysed how they said it. These were then deconstructed or 'unmade'. This process took me down a route, which almost ended in disaster. Many different ways of 'unmaking' them were tried: from grouping into themes and subthemes; by 'cutting and pasting' on my computer; to literally printing out the words and physically 'cutting and pasting'; print outs of the transcripts; pinning them to flipchart paper and arranging them around my room; and trying to visualise how these could fit together. Soon, I discovered that, actually, I had cut out the richness of the stories and was left with meaningless expressions, which provided little or no insights into the cultural scenario. Also, I had omitted my

personal narratives and observations and experiences captured in my pre and post interview sheets and in my reflective diary. By recreating the transcripts and my observations as if they were theatre, enabled me to present the main cultural themes and to communicate what was said and what was observed. Once the production was created, I required a way of summarising what it meant.

Following on from this process, the themes, which had emerged, were organised in preparation for qualitative description. I worked through topics identifying key events, people and behaviour. The events picked were of special significance both personally or professionally to the people, who were part of this research. These events were to become a measure of the social meanings of those in the organisation. Then, I set about establishing patterns in the data. As Dey (1993) discussed, patterns as if they were building blocks, which you could put together and take apart in various ways until the finished product was complete. I attached meaning and significance to my analysis during the interpretation stage. At this stage, I explained the patterns, categories and relationships, which I had uncovered. This was an important stage as I had to ensure that the correct meaning was attached to the data so that I could do justice to the meanings of the people in the organisation. Hammersley (1990:60) said that *'no knowledge is certain, but knowledge claims to be judged reasonably accurately in terms of their likely truth'*. I adopted an interpretive paradigm with a relativist stance, which meant that I recognised multiple meanings and subjective realities. Therefore, truth was relative with more than one reality, as what was true for one might be untrue for another. I had to ascertain the multiple truths in consideration of the standards, which I had developed and enhanced through my understanding of the people in the organisation.

However, when trying to find a way of presenting the findings, I spent an extensive amount of time trying to make the findings 'fit' an existing model or develop a new model, which would enable me to represent what was uncovered in the field. I considered two models in particular, namely, the cultural web (Johnson, 1988) and the 7s framework (Peters and Waterman, 1982) since both considered the formal and informal aspects of organisations. These models not only disagreed with my

perspective of organisations and cultures, when represented on paper, but both did not show properly the complexity of the text (Czarniawska – Joerges and Jacobsson, 1995). The non verbal process of communication had a significant impact on the audience's experience of the performance such as the posture of the social actor; their demeanour; their eye contact (or lack of eye contact) with the audience; the confidence with which they move around the stage and take up their position; and matching the speed of delivery, the tone and pitch of their voices to the demands of the text. All of these factors featured in the audience's perception of what they had to say. This was captured but was not represented in the models which I was attempting to use. Often based on Goffman's (1959) work on impression management, researchers have explored leaders' verbal and nonverbal practices (Rosenfeld et al, 1995; Garnder and Avolio, 1998; Harvey, 2001) and they recognised increasingly the role between appearance, attitude and success in organisations (Hochschild, 1983). Therefore I wanted to present all aspects of the social actors' appearance, their 'artistic control' (Hopfl, 2002), which were at risk of being omitted and required a method, which would allow me to present this richness.

Presenting interpretations

The social actors brought enormous amounts of cultural competence to bear in their everyday lives and I needed a way of interpreting it. This research viewed the social actors and the life of the organisation metaphorically as if it was theatre. By presenting the material as if it was theatre, to be played out on paper, rather than on stage, I was able to tell stories with scenes and acts to unveil the invisible structures of social life. There are two main theatrical perspectives, as shown in Figure seventeen:

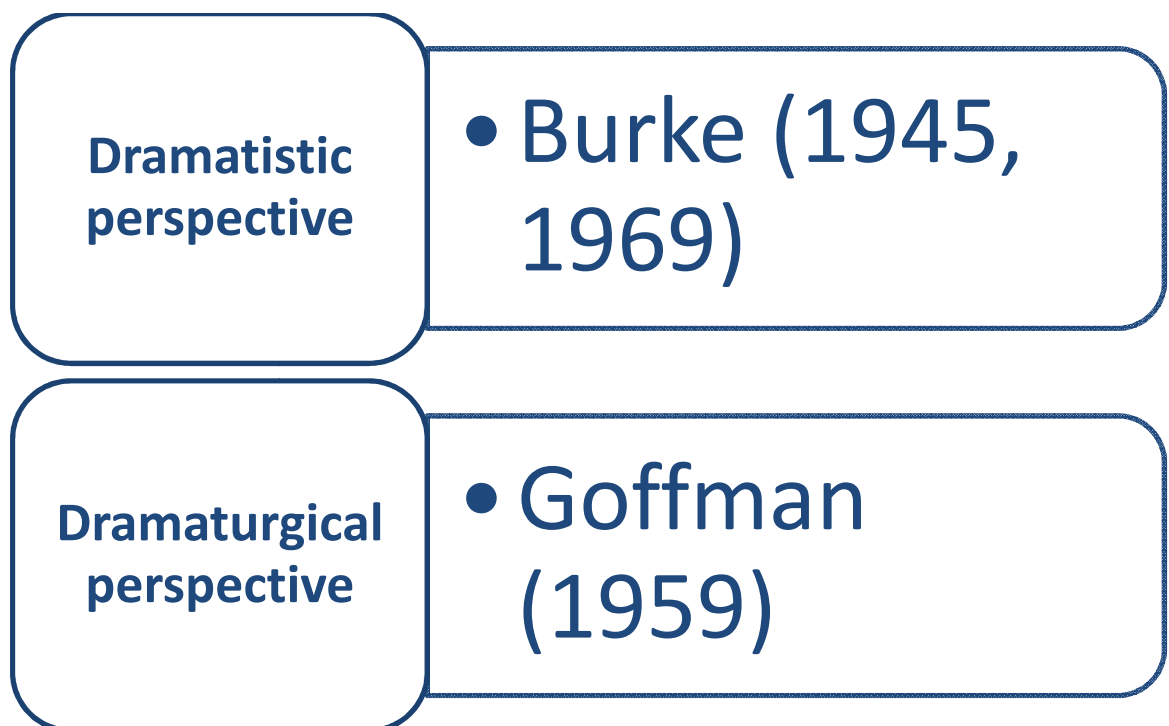


Figure seventeen: Theatrical perspectives

The dramatistic perspective holds the ontological position that social and organisation life is theatre; this research does not support this view. I believe that the ontological position is that of the dramaturgy perspective (Goffman, 1959), whereby social and organisation life may be treated as if it were theatre. However, I have borrowed from the dramatistic model of human behaviour, the pentad, as a way of analysing what has been presented theatrically.

I present the findings of this research from the dramaturgy perspective (Goffman, 1959). This perspective stemmed from Burke's (1945, 1969) work on dramatism but was portrayed as a more metaphorical use of theatre; enabling an exploration between the interactions of social actors within the organisation; and exploring interactions from the perspective of impression management (Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1959) believed that the processes of everyday interaction were of fundamental importance to the understanding of social order. These processes could be seen as involving actors and spectators giving and receiving impressions with more of a focus on their subconscious than purposeful projections – the impressions we give when we speak and over which we have some control and the information that we give off unintentionally through our behaviour. The dramaturgical perspective has been used by other researchers to describe and analyse face to face interactions (Schlenker, 1980; Gardner and Martinko, 1988; Giacalone and Rosenfeld, 1989; Brissett and Edgley, 1990; Gardner, 1992; Grove and Fisk, 1992; Rosenfeld et al., 1995; Gardner and Avolio, 1998). This was a way of analysing the interpreted self, through the eyes of those doing the interpreting (Manning, 2000). I was able to focus on detecting and interpreting the appearances, which people presented in specific situations relating to themes and settings. Goffman aimed to describe and explain aspects of face-to-face interaction in a consistently sociological manner.

The use of metaphors allowed me to bring together each story in combination with my own, and put them together to make my own story, which would allow others to reinterpret my interpretations. In doing so, I had to consider, as Kostera (2006) stated, who the main characters were, what the story line(s) were, the roles of other characters and what type of story I wanted to write.

Justification of choice of social actors presented within this production

The main social actors presented within the production were involved in the one-to-one pre arranged face-to-face interviews. However, these interactions were informed by the many years, which I spent in the organisation, observing employees of all levels in the organisation, and trying to uncover the social actors' perceptions of the social world there. These interactions provided clues about the individual's competence within the culture. The process of deciding who and what would be included within the performance is outlined in Figure eighteen below:

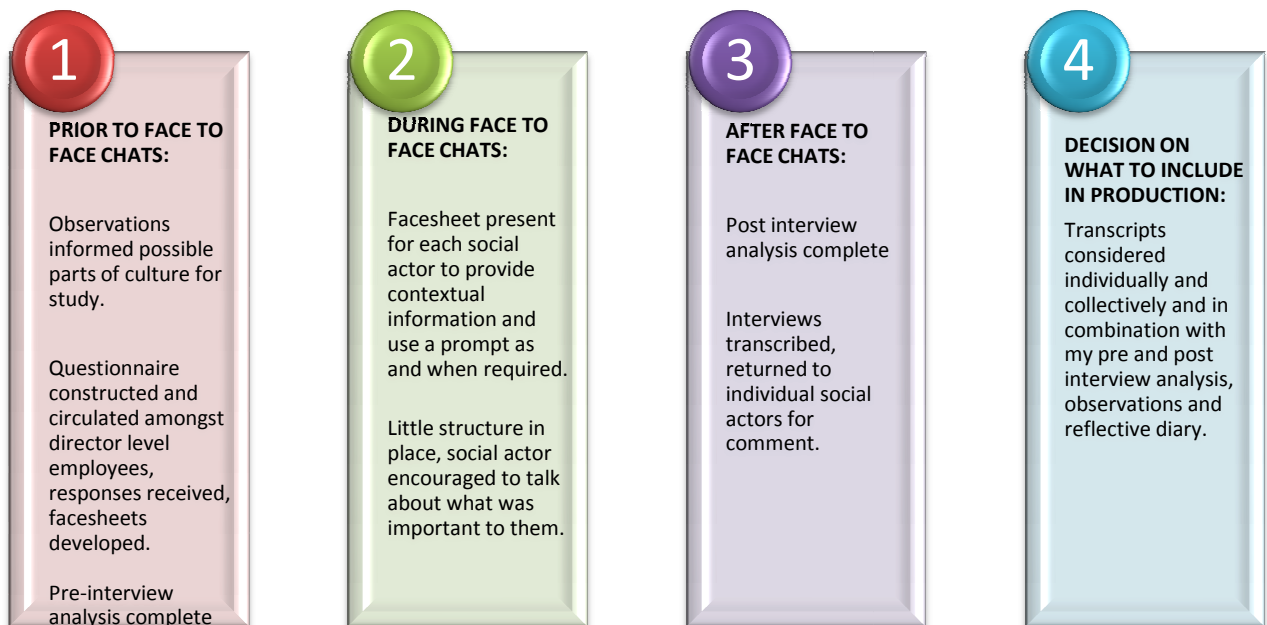


Figure eighteen: Representation of social actors

Stage one outlines many months of observations, which highlighted possible interesting parts of culture. I did not analyse the questionnaire responses per se. They were considered separately, simply as a way of gaining contextual information about those, who might be part of the production. I placed all

respondents into categories based on their levels of service and, then, I invited a selection from each category to participate in a one-to-one session. In the end, three non-director level employees took part in the 'rehearsal' which, at the time, was intended to test the method. However, due to the richness of the stories which unfolded, these were included within the final performance, although not represented to the same degree. I intended the cast to be twelve director level employees with differing levels of responsibility but, due to availability, only eleven took part. However, this did not impact the performance. Stage two outlines the one-to-one interviews which I had with the social actors. The social actors never performed together. This would have been inappropriate since they did not wish to share their personal scripts with one another. Stage three outlines the process, which took place to produce individual scripts. Stage four describes the analysis of the vast amount of data, which was gathered before, during and after the performances. Firstly, I viewed the interview transcripts individually, before considering them collectively. I used them in combination with my reflective diary and my pre and post interview notes to produce my perspective of possible multiple scenarios of the social reality within the organisation. However, not all social actors were represented equally throughout this production because of the variances in the richness of the texts, which we constructed together through our face-to-face conversations. All were willing to participate, but to different degrees. Some were more open to dialogue whereas others appeared uncomfortable with the lack of structure. As a result, there was a complete variety of transcripts in terms of their length and, also, their richness.

Justification of what to present within the production – themes

During the process of considering the many perspectives on the social reality, many themes and sub-themes emerged. After an extensive amount of time, many themes were distilled and combined to produce three main themes and seven sub-themes, which are shown In Figure nineteen below:

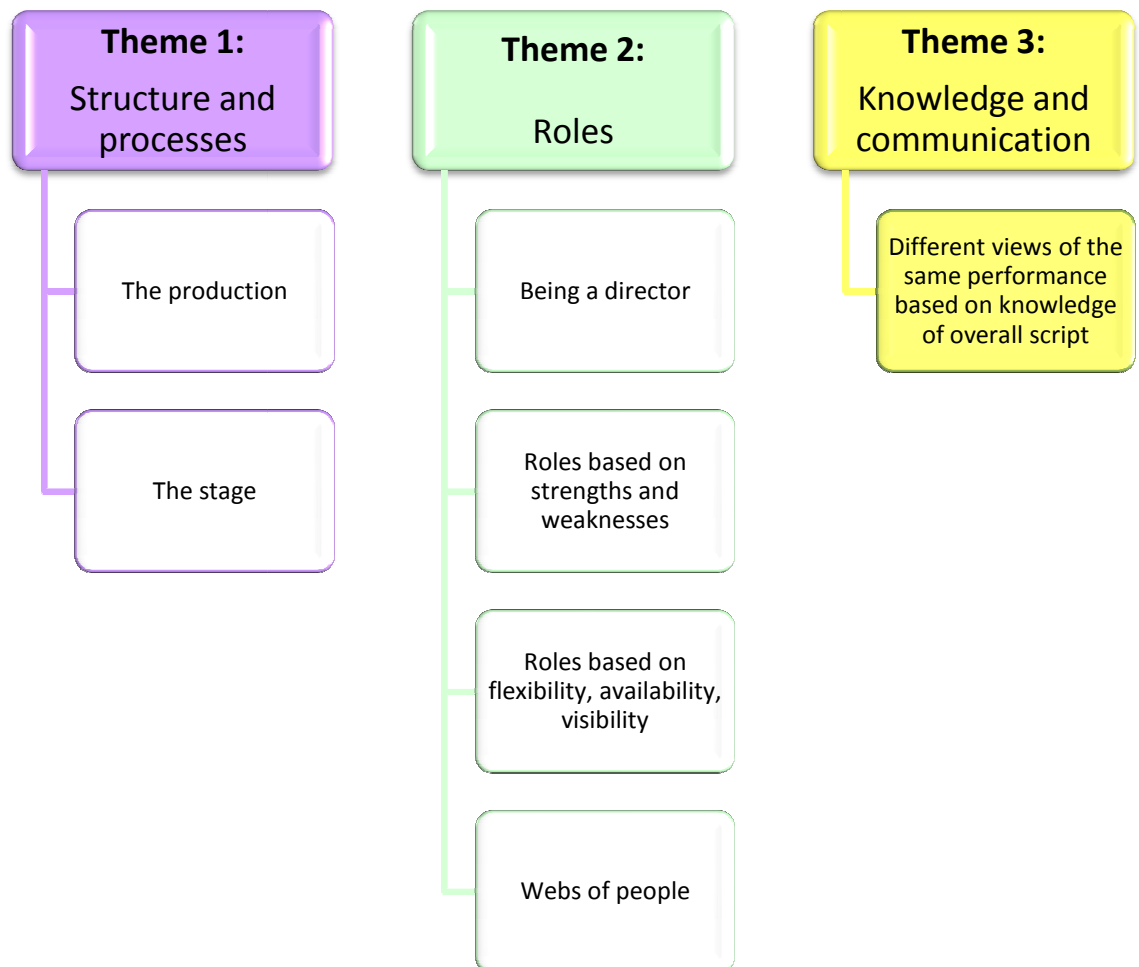


Figure nineteen: Overview of themes and subthemes

These main themes were presented as acts and sub-themes as scenes within a production; transcripts and observations were transformed into scripts. Consequently, whilst these were produced individually, they were prepared collectively to present my perspectives of the multiple social realities.

Chapter Four: Presentation of Findings

This research is presented partly as a novel and partly as a drama in order to provide a picture of the complex social phenomenon under study. It is a dramatic work, presented as an on stage production, with actors conveying experiences during the research. It was a study of appearances, rather than reality. Culture was considered as a script for those in organisations and this has been reinterpreted into a production is being played out only on paper, rather than on a stage. It is presented in this way not to instigate change within the organisation but as a way of bringing out what was discovered in life so that readers can interpret this social reality using their own imagination. An on stage production was simply a vehicle to demonstrate the many different realities and perspectives in the social phenomenon. Initially, I was concerned about associating this work to a novel and considering the characters as fictional. However, I believe that there was an element of fiction in this work given that there were multiple realities, which were subjective and changed constantly. What was true then, might not be true now, and, in fact, may have shifted even immediately after conversations had taken place. I interpreted these in an imaginative way, and put together a production using my own voice as the central and consistent voice throughout the entire journey. In a similar way to much of the literature about ethnography, I regarded myself as the central 'instrument' to this research. I considered that this choice of presentation was essential if I was to reveal the richness of the many different perspectives and shifting realities, which emerged whilst interacting within the phenomenon. I had the role of narrator, which was necessary to tell the story and explain the interpretations because, without this narrative, there would have been gaps.

Within this chapter, I provide an introduction to the main social actors, along with highlights of their performance as a way of an introduction to their characters. In addition, I provide a brief overview of their individual performances to present my perceptions of our interaction. The three main themes, which emerged during my time in the organisation, namely – structures and process, roles and knowledge and communication - are introduced as acts, in which the social actors give their performances, and the sub-themes are presented as scenes.

My roles within the production

It was not immediately obvious to me to use the metaphor of theatre to describe organisations. However, I was aware, always, of the existence of drama in my own life, with almost everything being repackaged into a story to be passed on to others. This was something, which I really enjoyed and seemed to do naturally and effortlessly. There were many social actors in the scenes of this production and there will be a brief introduction to each of them. They all seemed ambitious and had differing levels of understanding of the cultural scenario, which appeared to impact on their progression within the organisation. There was no obvious director of their collections of performances, and nobody guiding the scenes. As Kostera (2006) described, this was a study of organisational reality and people had multiple roles, which required presentation from different angles and many perspectives. My role was multifaceted. It is worth noting that, as human beings, we do not have a single identity; we have multiple identities, which we move between subconsciously. Depending on the context we see the world in different ways; I am a daughter, a sister, a wife, a friend, a researcher, an employee. In terms of this research, it is important that I explain my roles so that you are able to evaluate my evidence and to verify my claims. My roles were:

- **The fan** – ‘backstage’ access to interview the social actors (role of the researcher).
- **Member of the audience** – observing the performances (observer/spectator).
- **Bit part actor** – nipping in and out of scenes, and as time passed, taking up a more permanent role was taken up (a participatory and not simply an observational role).
- **Narrator** – Telling the stories of my own experiences and those of other actors.
- **The reviewer** – trying to make sense of the performance (interpreter).

Past roles and performances

This chapter provides some context by discussing my current and past theatrical roles. I focus primarily on the role of employee but, naturally, my other roles come into play throughout. In reflecting on organisations of which I have been part, I could liken my experiences easily to a theatrical production. I present snippets of my theatrical roles as a means of providing contextual information, which have informed my view of the world.

The customer service assistant

As part of a retail organisation for over eight years, I distinctly remember an occasion when I was walking down the corridor within the warehouse, which led to the shop floor, and to meeting the public and seeing a poster on the doors, which read *'smile, you are about to go on stage'*. At the time, this did not resonate with me. I dismissed it as I was quite bemused with its tackiness. Looking back, although I still think this was not very tasteful, there was an element of truth in it. When I walked through those doors, I was faced with the public, my public and it was my role to serve them. I was well trained and this, in combination with my experience, meant that I had learnt how to play a part. I knew what was required and, similarly, what was known and acted out my role accordingly. Hopfl (2002) discussed improvisation in roles and how this was not always welcomed. Nevertheless, in this role, improvisation was a key feature of my role. Thinking on my feet and adlibbing, almost always in accordance with the corporate guidelines or script, were essential if I was to be able to carry out my job and provide customer satisfaction. Hiding behind my uniform, I became part of the show, which was there to 'delight' the customer. This is no different to the role that actors' roles within theatrical productions; you were there to serve your audience and to please them. Although my personality shone through, my training and experience meant that I was able to interact with the public in a sincere fashion. It was undoubtedly an act but in the nicest possible way. I was always prepared for my show, hair swept back, uniform pressed, and name badge in place. I was ready to face the world and begin my eight hour gruelling performance. During the performance, I would adopt a

different accent as I could not use my usual colloquial accent. I had to speak 'properly' in order to be understood and taken seriously. Each performance was different depending upon the audience I was interacting with. This was the beginning of my professional performances.

The lecturer

My retail experience was character building and the skills and experiences gained stood me in good stead for many other dramas, which would unfold in future roles. I had several part-time lecturing jobs, often simultaneously, teaching students with mixed educational abilities and cultural backgrounds (differing religions and languages). Lecturing was the most obvious position, which I have held, where I could recognise easily that I was acting. In order to teach, I had to become convincing and entertaining and adopt many different roles- the educator, the disciplinarian, the comedian - all to deliver my message, the message of the curriculum or the script. I had to make this curriculum come alive in order for people to understand and learn. The main way that I did this, and still continue to do, was by revealing quite a lot of my personality, by letting students see parts of me as a person, giving them something to relate to, letting something of myself go – completely throwing myself into the role. As the students would gaze back at me as I lectured, I was aware that they had many different perceptions of what I was delivering, similar to that of those sitting in a theatre watching a performance; all with different views of the same production based on their personal experiences and feelings.

The knowledge management consultant

My first job, which did not involve any interaction with the public, was very different. I found it very difficult to understand my role, how to act, and, indeed, who represented my audience. For approximately one year within the organisation, most of my time was taken up trying to uncover 'the rules of the game'; trying to uncover how things *really* worked within the organisation; and how to play the game. This was no easy process; I was filled with anxiety and fuelled with a deep desire to become a player. There were many highs and lows and periods of sheer frustration

of being unable to untangle the messy web of what seemed like a mystery surrounding 'how we do things around here'. It seemed as if there was a rule book somewhere within the organisation but its location was unknown and the contents seemed to be written in invisible ink. As time moved on, I developed relationships and grew networks. It seemed that the answer to gaining access to this valuable knowledge lay in building and developing relationships, and gaining trust, normally through your reputation. I invested a significant amount of time in building and crafting relationships to assist my understanding of the cultural scenario. I had a lot to learn since there was no script of the social phenomena, no rules and I was uncertain about the audience with which to interact and please.

This is where I begin the story and introduce the social actors and perspectives of the organisation with their different realities.

Overview of the production

I present the findings of this research as a production, which represents the actual words captured in my reflections on my observations and the conversations, which I shared with the individual social actors. These illustrate the embedded, hidden issues within the social context of the organisation, illuminating what is normally left in the shade. By observing social actors within their natural settings, and analysing the symbols, used in face to face interaction, I was able to gain an understanding of the way they perceived purpose and meaning. I found it helpful to consider the social actors in terms of what their position would be if they were on a physical stage in order to interpret those, who were and were not 'in the know' and their apparent differing levels of understanding of the cultural scenario. These were:

- **Those on centre stage** – leading roles, fuller script, and understanding of the whole production.

- **Those on the periphery** – relatively significant role, understanding of their script and understanding of how their part in the performance related to the bigger production.
- **Those in the background** – small parts to play, understanding of their script, no real understanding of the whole production.

Meet the cast

I introduce each social actor with some key captions of:

- our conversations;
- their individual accounts;
- some observational information;
- my perspective on them and their role; and
- non verbal aspects of their performance such as dress code, body language and artefacts utilised.

Key captions are highlighted to provide insight into the subconscious impressions being 'given off' (Goffman, 1959).

Rebecca

She is in her early thirties, professionally trained, but working in a different specialism to her training. She is not a director but has a role in strategy development. This face to face chat took place a year before any of the others, because Rebecca was leaving the organisation for a short while and I wanted to speak to her before this occurred. She joined the organisation when it was going through a consolidation exercise and her role in strategy meant that she had knowledge of how some of these changes were handled,

*'....traditionally we had looked at obviously the financial measures within the business, but, the **change in the leadership of the business, it's sort of went from something that was very 'treat them mean, keep them keen', and the management was focused on a lot more sort of people focus about bringing people into the business that I think the point that I was making was that in our business we don't have any products to sell it's just purely the people that are out there delivering the service and keeping them involved and interested in the business is quite key to that'** (PIL: 28-37).*

Rebecca almost predicted what would happen over the year that followed,

*'Because I think what you will find is, not my thing to say, but I think what you will probably find is that the people, who are the **saboteurs for this sort of culture**, will find themselves **more and more isolated within the business** and I don't mean that they will **be forced out**. It will become a culture that will not suit their way of working. And I think that they will probably leave naturally. So I think you will, you know once you have **got rid of the people**, who are having the negative impact, replacing them with people, who are coming in to accept this culture from day one, it will definitely improve' (PIL: 329 – 340).*

Appearing to be a strategic thinker, she was quite astute when it came to considering business change,

*'Yeah, I think the thing is Susan, is that we are not even a year into a completely new way of working. And that was, you know, when we restructured at Christmas, you can put a hierarchy in place in a week but what **you can't do is change the mindset of people**, and that's from the very, very top level of the business, you know from the board level down..... but I don't think that any business could change its culture around that quickly. I think it takes a minimum of two years to be able to see the impact of changes like that. I think that it is still early days for us'. (PIL: 312 – 323).*

Overview of Rebecca's performance

Rebecca and I had two conversations: one face-to-face, one over the telephone, this was due to an issue with the recording equipment, the first conversation was more natural, relaxed and informal, the second was littered with, *'what I was saying was...'* (PIL: 27) and *'I think I had said...'* (PIL: 107), more focusing on trying to recap what had previously been covered and not recorded. Due to depart the organisation on leave, Rebecca was very relaxed, her dress code was fairly casual.

Martha

Martha comes across as someone who is not happiest whilst being part of a corporate environment. She can play her part and does so. However, she would like to be part of something that makes a difference and there are several references throughout her performance to working within community projects as illustrations. Martha is in her early forties and has had a varied but extensive career. However, she doesn't have an extensive academic background, nor sees the need for one,

*'I've just always worked, and to be honest there's a lot to be said for it, there are lots of people in here with a lot, degrees and counter degrees and triple degrees and stuff (laughs) and the bottom line is **you need to have experience, you need to have practical experience of handling people** and disseminating information and getting information and just basically dealing with people and you can't learn that in a book I think you can just learn that on the job.....'* (PIL: 1075 – 1099).

By her own admission, she is an informal person,

*'I'm a fairly informal person..... people are sometimes more formal, or and I think what probably makes them more formal is a lack of confidence, you know I'm (in my forties) I've been doing this job or a job very similar to it for hundreds and hundreds of years, I know what I'm doing..... **I don't need the support of some formal sort of structure, so I feel more relaxed, and I think that makes people feel more relaxed....'*** (PIL: 874 – 881), *'..... I think people do look at me, and I think I have an **extra hurdle to cross because they make judgement about the way I look definitely because I don't look very smart and I don't look very competent**, so I think I have to kind of prove my professionalism in another way'* (PIL: 889 – 891), she is informal in appearance in a fairly formal environment.

Relationships are fundamental to Martha to carrying out her role,

*'....I'm good at **building instant relationships** that are **intensive** for the period they're going to last, which is likely 3 days, and then I move onto the next thing...'* (PIL: 156 – 158) *.....'I'm **good at going to people, looking them in the eye and winning them over**, and somehow they start with arms folded but after a few minutes they relax and like me, I'm **good at getting people to open up**'* (PIL: 840 – 844).

Martha is not a director level employee, and, therefore, is not on the main stage.

Overview of Martha's performance

Martha always has a smart, casual appearance, never wears a suit. Her blackberry remained on her desk, off the main stage. She had a new hair style, which was making her feel quite self conscious. Prior to recording starting, Martha wanted to find out what the focus of the chat would be so that she was prepared and she mentioned confidentiality whilst recording, *'....well to be perfectly honest, given the fact that this conversation isn't going anywhere...'* (PIL: 431). She seemed quite nervous, which was unusual, as she normally seems very in control and confident, yet throughout the performance she was very reflective and noted how this made her feel, albeit in a joking fashion, *'I can't believe it's like having psychoanalysis it's stressful, I also don't think I'm not sure how to articulate this really...'* (PIL: 804 – 805).

Judy

Judy is in her early thirties, ambitious and gave the impression that she liked a lot of control and recognition. In the past, she had more control and responsibility, but after several years and many months away from the organisation, she comes across as being quite uncertain about her role and the changing focus of the organisation. She feels that she has been treated unfairly in her role, *'I was **shafted**....'* (PIL: 619). Being a fairly long-serving employee, Judy could provide insight into her experiences of the evolving organisation,

*'I preferred the business a couple of years ago, I feel it's no.... **I love this business** but I feel it's not necessarily ...pause..... Its seems to be getting a bit mixed up and there are a lot of changes going on at very senior levels, which causes uncertainty in the business, and that has a knock on effect and'* (PIL: 144-147)

It seemed quite difficult for her to speak about this. Also, she did make the point of stating that she still had faith in the organisation,

*'I have **faith** in our board'* (PIL: 501), *'I've not lost all my **faith** in this company yet'* (PIL: 1010). She discusses the organisation as if it was a being, *'I **love** this company, I know **it can do good things**, I just wish it would **settle itself down and sort itself out** and have a little bit of time to maybe just get on and really deliver good things and just sometimes feel it's all a bit manic....'* (PIL: 627 – 631).

Judy is not clear about the future shape of the organisation and, whilst she appreciates that not everything can be communicated, she thinks it could be handled better,

*'....and you know but obviously there's a lot of stuff they can't communicate but I think they need to be a bit more open and honest, particularly at a time where all this is happening, it's all very, **it seems a bit cloak and dagger**, what's going on and....'* (PIL: 510 – 513) and similarly, she feels that decision making could be a bit more apparent, *'you're never consulted about decisions, these decisions are made and **we kind of have to live with them**'* (PIL: 494 – 494).

Judy had a key role within her department; this seems to have moved on without her. She is not a director level employee, and, therefore, is not on the main stage.

Overview of Judy's performance

Judy is a very vocal character. It was important for her to outline that she had been with the organisation almost five years and that she thought that within the questionnaire that she should be in the category five years and above as this she felt best represented her experience in the organisation, *'No it will be 5 years in September the reason I put that down because I feel that 1 and 5 years is too broad, I feel that a person as being one year here is not the same as 5 and I feel like I've worked here sufficiently long that I would be more reflected in the 5 years plus, because your only talking a couple of months until I've been here 5 years....'* (PIL: 72-75). Contrary to what had been observed before, Judy was quite revealing and appeared honest about her concerns about the organisation and her role within it.

Jim

Jim is in his mid fifties, well respected within the organisation, awaiting a senior level post. The decision to employ new directors has impacted on him personally but he is still hopeful that he will get a promotion as a result of the organisational refocus,

*‘..... how can I put this, before they went out to the market for 15 directors, **I had hoped and it was eluded to that I would be stepped up** and then the 15 guys were brought in and one of them was given the position I had hoped to get, he’s since been demoted, **things may work out** as I say they’ve change management on the go.....’ (PIL: 277 – 281).*

Although he has experienced a lot of change,

*‘.... since I started I’m on my **9th boss** and I don’t think I’m unique in that’ (PIL: 182 – 183)*

He wants to stay within the organisation,

*‘I don’t want another job, **I regard this the best job that I’ve ever had**, and I don’t want to leave here, I want to **work through all the changes**, just don’t want another job just want to do the job I’m doing’ (PIL: 308 – 310).*

He is very experienced and places a lot of importance on building relationships in an informal way, providing an example of meeting informally with a potential client,

*‘..... you really get to know people when you’re having a drink or you having a bite to eat or your playing golf or something like that, **getting to know the person**, and they **will tell you stuff if they like**, because **you’re not seen as a threat**, your seen as somebody they can bend their ear with bend their ear on, get rid of some of their frustrations, are you wishing you had your note pad with you (laughs)’ (PIL: 613 – 618)*

He was aware of how to build relationships and find out the key knowledge that would enable him to progress things in a work context. Jim isn’t a director level employee, and therefore not on the main stage, but aspires to be.

Overview of Jim’s performance

Jim had not completed the questionnaire before our face to face chat and, therefore, there was no background information to stimulate the discussion. He appeared reluctant to speak as the conversation was being recorded, although he agreed to it being captured in this way. There were many silences, uncomfortable ones. He was dressed in suit trousers and an open necked shirt, but was questioning the whole reason for being involved and, on many occasions, would point to the recorder or indicate that he and others would be reluctant to have their conversations recorded by mentioning things such as,

‘without naming any names’ (PIL: 293-294), ‘I can tell you about it off line if you want’ (PIL: 424), ‘You recording all this, a lot of people might allow the conversation to take place, but you’ll get a political answer, you’ll get a different type of answer’ (PIL: 817-818).

It was more interesting considering how Jim behaved and what he did not say, rather than focusing on what he said.

Sarah

Sarah is professionally trained in her late twenties, she is very pretty and confident and one not to be messed with,

*'I mean if you're going to have a difficult conversation or you're going to have a **hard negotiation face to face is best way to do it**, people are more reasonable if you're **looking at them in the eyes**, on a phone call or something it's a lot harder to **get what you want**' (INT: 470 – 472).*

She is tough, hard talking,

*'..... the only time I have is if there's been very high level people that we've been **getting rid of** and there need to be investigation and its highly sensitive I'll do that' (INT: 219 – 221)*

Appears ambitious at any cost,

*'I don't think it had that much of an impact, well it didn't impact on me, maybe impacted on other people, **but to be honest its business**, and **if you can't hack it you just get on with it**, and all business are the same they're all run the same way' (INT: 369 – 371)*

Her position meant that she had insider knowledge and, therefore, was not as impacted by the changes as others were. She was very aware of how to play the game,

*'Well yes, as long as **you carve the role out yourself** I guess you can take it in whatever direction as long as it fits the business and it complements the business there's no restrictions on it' (INT: 630 – 632).*

Sarah could be considered centre stage of this performance.

Overview of Sarah's performance

Sarah reschedules the performance so that it takes place on her terms in a location which means she doesn't have to go to any bother; it takes place within the 'departure lounge'. She is at the side of the stage wondering when the show will begin; I was waiting in one of the glass meeting rooms, and she didn't know I was there, so I made my presence known as I had overheard her speaking about me. Sarah enters the stage, crisp power suit, armed with her Blackberry which was turned off for the performance.

Pete

Pete is a middle aged man with a very practical background; he can come across as very harsh at times,

*'I wouldn't call myself bolshie, but you know **I didn't take any shit from anybody**' (INT: 535 – 536)*

Once you get to know him, build a relationship and establish trust, he is not as threatening, he's a likeable rogue. Pete says what he feels at that moment, and it is not always politically correct, he is very passionate and his honesty is not always appreciated,

*'...apparently I can come across as quite **cocky and arrogant** I don't see it as that...' (INT: 444 – 445), 'I don't change my approach to people. I might do with my priest (laughs)....' (INT: 216 – 217)..... 'I'm probably **direct and blunt** I **don't change my language for anybody**, male female, director managing director, cleaner' (INT: 451 – 452)*

Not playing the game has had consequences for Pete. After over five years in the arena, he is now learning how to play the game,

*'...oh listen the reason I didn't progress two or three years ago was because of that, **I was too open**, there was certain kind of **board room ethics** that I never quite grasped...' (INT: 466 – 467)..... '**there's a game to be played**, but you have to retain a positive spirit or a positive attitude, there's always positives like the negatives' (INT: 482 – 483).*

Pete now believes that age and experience have changed his approach,

*'I'm a lot **more relaxed** than I was two years ago..... (INT: 488), '...things **don't wind me up** like they used to' (INT: 494), 'I was brutal, absolutely brutal' (INT: 500).*

Pete is on the periphery or even in the background; it was difficult to interpret.

Overview of Pete's performance

After rescheduling with little notice, Pete enters the stage, smelling of smoke and aftershave but very smart in his suit. Not trusting of the whole performance, Pete remains guarded throughout and uses his humour as a defence, his language is coarse but not threatening, it is just how he expresses himself; this was learnt in past performances. Not being comfortable, Pete tried role reversal, attempting to change the focus from him, mentioning previous interactions that were shared. The exchange was mainly based on shared experiences. His blackberry remained on and although it rang, was not answered. Pete was very eager to know who else was on stage and if he could see a copy of the final transcript (INT: 1316, 1322 and 1400).

Graham

Graham is middle aged and confident,

*'.....but that's me being **comfortable with my own personal ability and value in what I do**' (INT: 779)*

With lots of integrity and standards,

*'I want them to **keep to the values** [organisational values as outlined in the vision], so if they have to break bad news then be **open and honest** about it and keep the people up-to-date if there's something good to tell them or if there's praise due then praise the people and let them know, and I certainly do that with them' (INT: 506 – 508), 'I probably **set pretty high standards** and I'm quite pernickety might be..... but they[his team] know that and they rise to that always, and I think they feel that **our reputation** is something worth keeping and enhancing' (INT: 715 – 717).*

Originally his background was very practical. However, he revisited education in his later years and the combination of his life, work and educational experiences means that he appears to have a rich overview of different contexts, which enables him to see the bigger picture and build relationships,

*'I might have a degree, whatever you've got but there's a hell of a lot the **university of life** as they call it, you're going to learn something every day and that's about meeting people it's about travelling it's about **seeing things from their perspective**.....' (INT: 394 – 398).*

He seems like a genuine character,

*'I'm **very open and honest** with the team and I would certainly **trust them with information** that I give them, and they know that if they give me information back its trusted as well, so **that's a two way thing**' (INT: 394 – 398).*

Graham appears to be on centre stage.

Overview of Graham's performance

Graham turned up on time, wearing a suit, shirt and tie, put his blackberry off and made the performance the sole focus of his attention. He could have written the script beforehand; it was clear that he had thought a lot about what he wanted to speak about before coming on stage.

Barbara

In her early thirties, Barbara thinks of herself as an unconventional lady,

*'....you know I'm **not your typical wife**, you know I don't cook, I clean now and again, I'm not there ironing my husband's shirt, I'm not at home every night, I go out to dinner with lots of other men, I'm not your typical wife' (INT: 282 – 284).*

She is plain talking, often using masculine language,

*'I think you've got to have the **balls to challenge**, but equally take that challenge back' (INT: 628 – 629), 'I don't pretend to be something I'm not' (INT: 201) and very ambitious and determined, 'I have **worked really hard**, but it's been a **determination**, I'm a very **planned and organised person** in general, and I always have the next plan and I really want to achieve that, and if **someone turns round to me and says you're never going to do that, do you know what yes I am, yes**, and I guess that I am naturally ambitious and determined' (INT: 304 – 307) 'I've only once ever not got the promotion that I wanted to get, only once, and the guy said to me come back when your properly qualified and older, and I thought you know what, **fuck you, I'm going to do this**' (INT: 312 – 314)*

She knows how to play the game very well,

*'I've **got some credibility**, and what I've done in the past and I've got some credibility at board level on my skills and experience I have to turn that around at this level as well but **one of the reasons I've been given that opportunity is one that I've asked for it, but secondly that I've delivered**, if I hadn't delivered before they would tell me to pack my bags and don't even think about doing something like that' (INT: 206 – 264).*

Barbara appears to be on centre stage.

Overview of Barbara's performance

Barbara was on stage early, no blackberry in sight. Her costume often comprised very high heeled shoes and tailored suits. Barbara has real insider knowledge and before showing this side to the audience, wanted to be reassured of confidentiality.

Jack

Jack has a light, refreshing approach and has only been part of the organisation for 18 months,

'Ok so you know I've been here about 18 months, I've now become one of these long serving people whose been here for 12 months [laughs]' (INT: 15-16)

He appears open and honest and quite culturally astute,

(on joining an organisation overseas), '..... it took me quite a while to realise it's a cultural thing, that when they talk to someone, someone will come along and say, 'look Jack' and I think 'oh my god what have I done', and that's just what they do, every sentence starts with a 'look Jack' or 'look Susan', they're not saying you've missed the point here that's just their way, and the two things are firstly to realise they're not being rude when they say that, and secondly if you want something done you have to start your sentence with 'look John', otherwise they won't talk you seriously' (INT: 91 – 97).

He is realistic and humorous,

'The restructure created the opportunity to let me join with [the organisation], so I have to say it was a great idea [laughs] (INT: 201 – 202).

Jack appears self aware, however, believes sometimes he can be too self aware, (on feedback sessions),

'I'm quite self aware and my wife and I we talk about those things anyway, what we've done all that and stuff so there wasn't much that came out that surprised me, apart from they said I should take up jazz or something [laughs], no it didn't although there were a lot of people who were thoroughly surprised or astonished, or disappointed or delighted but I was quite happy but not it didn't surprise me' (INT: 735 – 739).....'I think I'm sometimes too self aware, too conscious of other people, [the executive director] and I will always have a laugh about it, [the executive director] will always say 'just get it done' and I'll say oh hang on..... and we laugh' (INT: 745 – 749).

His past organisational experiences equipped him with the tools to learn how to play the game,

'[past company] taught you a great deal how to get by, and all the firms do that they teach you enough confidence to talk to someone without knowing everything they know and then be able to ask questions and listen, ask something appropriate as a follow up.....' (INT: 54-56) 'it was a good business, but had to learn different things, although it was very similar it's like different regime different regulations and rules, different culture' (INT: 63-65).

Jack is on the periphery of the stage.

Overview of Jack's performance

Jack entered stage on time, instantly creating ease with his friendly, non threatening manner. As this meeting was taking place in the departure lounge, his suit jacket had been left off stage which presented an air of relaxation. Very open from the offset, Jack revealed many parts of his character and was comfortable with this. No blackberry in sight.

Robert

In his mid forties, Robert worked his way through the ranks in his early career,

'I was going to go to university, when I left school but when I got to 16 I didn't want to do that anymore, so took an apprenticeship with [an organisation]' (INT: 15-17)

Although he did undertake in-house training, the 'buzz' that Robert experienced was important,

'Loved it, I had a lot of good times at [company]' (INT: 52)..... *'and it was very positive and I enjoyed it don't get me wrong there were nights you could pull your hair out..... there was a buzz to it.....'* (INT: 60-64),

As well as the need to have something challenging at work,

'.....my wife describes it as never seen me happier than with [company]'.

Robert has had recent past knocks in his career, being unemployed for 6 months meant becoming a lorry driver as a stop gap, but he was very aware of the symbolic impact of his actions,

'..... I saw they were looking for drivers and I thought hang on a minute they must need drivers over the summer..... so I went in and of course this sounds bad, I'm driving an (expensive car) so I've got a 20 thousand pounds car and I'm looking for a drivers job, I think I'll park it round the corner', I walked in, I didn't put a suit on as you normally do for an interview, just smart casual, and the girl said 'oh fill in this application form'.... and they said 'what in god's name are you doing here?', I said 'let me stop you there, you need drivers I need to find a job that I can actually say after a week I'm actually leaving....'. gave me the job and I fitted in with the drivers' (INT: 271 – 292).

This period in Robert's career has made him more sensitive to business change,

(INT: 999 – 1010) *'....I think being unemployed for six months because that really took the wind out of me, I'm very much aware of the implications of not working and I don't want to go there again, so you want to keep one step ahead, that's why I'm watching this place.....'* Robert has only been part of the organisation for under a year and throughout this time he has become rather frustrated, *'.....there are people in the organisation, who are bull shitters, can't be bothered with them they get in the way, there are people who are so high and intellect they can't comprehend what we 'normal's' are talking about and there are a lot of people who are trying to put other people down in the business to keep their own position I can't be bothered with that at all.....'* (INT: 317 – 324)..... *'there are bull shitters that cause you problems and there are bull shitters that you have to push them to one side and ignore.... [approach for dealing with bull shitters] my usual approach is to give them enough rope to hang themselves and that's what I'm currently doing with a couple of them.....'* (INT: 367 – 372).

Robert appears to be back stage.

Overview of Robert's performance

Robert stormed on to stage and had an altercation with those already there, those that should have been off stage by that point. Due to his physique, he seemed quite intimidating; there was no prior relationship interaction, he was unknown until this point. Quite daunted by his very presence, he started off very aggressive but ended up running an hour over his allocated time on stage, he looked as if he had offloaded and left the stage looking far more relaxed than he had entered. He carried a large filofax under his which was stuffed full of paper, he relies on this rather than the blackberry which is utilised by his colleagues. Once he relaxed, another side of his character was revealed.

Rick

Rick started off with a very different background to his current role, as he had,

‘.....no direction in life whatsoever, quite happy floating along done ok, blah, blah, blah, went and played football, the old man(his father) sat me down and said what the hell are you going to do, don’t know..... baffled my way got my degree and again at the end of it, girlfriend, now wife was going ‘what the hell you going to do?..... did a post grad, and it’s just kind of trundled along since then, but I’ve found luckily that I’m actually alright at it’ (INT: 337 – 347).

In his mid thirties, he is the joker of the pack, (on a fellow director),

‘.....will pick up the phone and say, ‘I’m a director you know’, and I say you’re not you’re a bawbag [laughs]’ (INT: 408 – 409)

Title doesn’t appear to be important to Rick, although his role is. As a result of his knowledge and experience, he progressed fairly quickly within this organisation, as he started off as a manager and fairly soon he was a director

‘..... so a rapid progression to the top as they say’ (INT: 147), ‘..... right place, right time, there’s been a lot of change in the team there’s been an awful lot of change in terms of the structure and I’ve been fortunate that alongside that, I’ve been able to get to where I am just now’ (INT: 154 – 156), ‘I’ve been allowed to pretty well restructure all that we’re doing in our team at the moment, having great fun, and you know the role that I created for two other people and myself, the new structure I think makes an awful lot of sense.....for me on a personal basis I’m going to be entertained I would say in the stand down role not the overall role, for another 12,18 months’ (INT: 310-316).

He has insider knowledge and, therefore, understands why certain things take place,

‘and again its easy if you’re in the thick of it you go ‘oh my god another senior guy and he’s been here for ex length of time’, but I think if you were to stand back from it dispassionately you would look at it and go that’s probably again a pretty inevitable product of change’ (INT: 242 – 245), and therefore perhaps has a more unattached approach, ‘I think there is a bloodletting there is a requirement for fresh approach and fresh ideas and we’ve gotten to that point now and people leaving at times provides you with opportunities to do things differently.....’ (INT: 292 – 295).

His personality makes it difficult to know where you stand with him.

Rick appears to be centre stage.

Overview of Rick’s performance

Having rescheduled, Rick turned up in a suit with no tie which made him appear more relaxed. Rick made lots of jokes, making it difficult for me to take him seriously. He gave very safe performance; he also appeared to have thought about his performance before hand as he had many examples to hand which he thought would be desirable. For someone in his position, his choice of language was surprising, but this should not slight his professionalism.

Patricia

Patricia has had a career based in male dominated environments,

*'....I had to explain myself more because **they didn't believe a woman could do a lot of the things** obviously I could probably better than them' (INT: 27 – 28)*

She is loyal and worked her way up through the ranks in the organisation that she belonged to into a senior role, where she then had experiences of restructuring organisations. She has been very flexible toward career opportunities,

*'.....it was literally, 'we need you over there', 'when do you want me to go?', 'can it wait till Monday?'....[went overseas] thinking I was probably going over for 3, 6 maybe 9 months came back 4 and half years later, it was **exciting**, it was **fabulous deal**.....I was just delighted to go' (INT: 120-125), [on moving abroad] '.....but I'm **fairly sort of flexible** in things like that..... I had already **moved with my job all the time**..... I had a **good time, I enjoyed it, it didn't bother me in the slightest**' (INT: 135 – 140). Patricia has a 'work hard, play hard ethic', '.....when I went [overseas] the culture there was quite slightly different and because there was so much pressure to **get this deal through**, you did **work long hours**..... but then you think well **we're here for a purpose**..... Well I **play hard** as well, so I think no I'm **off to play**....' (INT: 174 – 175).*

Patricia had to learn how the new organisation worked,

*'.....you **didn't know anybody**, the culture of not having a desk, of **not having your own office**, but I've worked in open plan, the whole director suite here, **working out what we do here**, but I have to say the people are a great laugh, and sometimes I can't believe this is so light hearted, I enjoy it here...' (INT: 205 – 213). In her early forties, Patricia doesn't suffer fools gladly, she is straight talking, 'I will try and get to know them get to work with them I'm quite a tolerant person, my natural way is to be tolerant, but **if somebody isn't playing the game**, I can't stand that then **I will deal with them**.' (INT: 272 – 274), '.....there were occasions where I've thought 'hmmm we need to get a few things clear here', and **we've duly got the things clear and we've carried on**' (INT: 244-245)..... 'I just get the title **angel of death**, in a friendly way, because we had made it clear this is what we've got to do, and people sort of said well if Patricia comes along and says 'how can I help?' then you must be in trouble because you're not delivering what you're supposed to deliver.....' (INT: 408 – 414).*

Patricia appears to have a positive outlook,

*'Oh yes I'm positive, **I'm always on the up side the glass is always half full**.... (INT: 646 – 648), '..... you make your choices and some choices are made for you and you have to get on with them. But as someone says, **'you don't know what's around the next corner and the only way to find out is to get round there!'** [laughs] (INT: 791 – 794).*

She has a very honest approach to things and is someone you would trust as she comes across very genuinely. Her humour is refreshing. Patricia does not appear to struggle to play the game, it seems to come natural to her; perhaps she is making new rules. She appears to be centre stage.

Overview of Patricia's performance

Patricia had a reputation that made her appear quite daunting. However, she was entirely the opposite on stage. Turning up on time, her appearance was not overly formal, there was no blackberry in sight, she was engaging, interesting and inspiring. Sharing personal insights at the end of the performance was very touching; you could almost feel the experience that she described.

Martin

Martin is in his late 40s and is relatively new to the organisation. Having interesting work is important to him, [on past organisation],

*'.....but I was just **going brain dead with them, too small, really no vision**, and an opportunity came up this time last year, an advert for people, so I came in at the beginning of January' (36-38).*

Martin had to adapt to a new way of working, a new way of finding out information upon joining the organisation,

'[on finding information] Hard, and that's maybe a generational thing, one of the first things I asked for when I came in was 'have you got a directory?..... oh the intranet....', and it's just if your used to picking up a book and looking through it, or picking up a phone, yes to that to me has been a bit of a challenge'(INT: 108 – 115).

He has mixed views of working relationships,

*'I find the **people are really great** and that's being dead straight, **they're really committed, really straightforward, there's no doubt a bit of politics and bitchiness**, but that's not a major thing.....' (INT: 66 -67), however, he also said, 'I would be happy to sit anywhere..... initially I sat beside these guys, but **there was one guy who was very friendly, pretty accommodating, the rest were, they weren't openly hostile and they just blanked you, wouldn't volunteer anything** and I actually sit beside two PA's, [Personal Assistants]..... they know everything.' (INT: 141 – 145). Personal development and developing others is important to Martin, 'I have **developed people and moved people up** my object was always to try and make myself redundant, damn right that way your progress, **once you have developed people underneath you to do your job then you can move on**, the minute you say to people, 'no I'll do that', then you're going to be in that job for the rest of your life, and do you really want to be in that job for the rest of your life?' (INT: 314-319).*

The changes within the organisation did not faze Martin,

*'I think **if I was a less mature person I would be more worried**, for a whole variety of reasons, mortgage young family all that stuff, and the mortgage is very manageable now but if you were in your late 30's with a young family' (INT: 522-524).*

He understands the game, but is not a player, he is in the background.

Overview of Martin's performance

Martin was late, ran into the room with a sandwich in hand and proceeded to eat throughout the performance. His blackberry rang during the meeting a few times but was silenced.

Kenneth

Kenneth seems like a hard working, likable man and always desired to succeed in life and this stems from his background; it was important for him to tell this part of his story,

*'.....I always had the inclination to probably **make myself better and make a bit cash and move on.....**' (INT: 38-39).*

He describes his personal qualities,

*'I quite **like talking** and I've **got a great story to tell** and I have a lot of life experience and I am a **good listener** as well **and I will listen to people**' (INT: 1049 – 1050).*

He is self-aware,

*'Working in a commercial market for the first **time I knew I had to act differently.....**' (INT: 251).*

Processes have changed quite significantly since Kenneth began his career,

*'but in those days **you didn't need qualifications** as such, you just had to go down to the ship yard and get a job and if you were a decent enough guy **you could talk your way round things, and basically I did.....**' (INT: 50-54)*

He had a very practical background and undertook educational courses after he had begun his professional career. He is a 'wise old bird', who has been around for a long time and has seen many changes in his time; people turn to him to find out historical information. Kenneth used to be very good at playing the game in this organisation as well as others. He sincerely believes that he has had a hand in the success of the organisation,

*'I've **helped to build the business up.....** now that's because of me alone but **I honestly believe that in my heart that I influenced that.....**' (INT: 515-519).*

He knows that there is a game to be played, but also that the rules have changed, as he was once a key decision maker, and is aware that this isn't quite the same anymore,

*'People look at me and think he must be in that **inner circle** and I'm not, there are only two people in that inner circle' (INT: 946 – 948). The organisation changed, '.... people were brought into the business and **at that point I became less and less valuable.....** I didn't realise that I was less useful then, so we're now moving into a next area, **you don't take your guy from Patrick Thistle and move him into Rangers.....** and I kind of realised that and although **it was hard I knew it was the right thing to do** and I knew it was the right thing for the business' (INT: 643-649)*

The rules of the game appear to have changed; however, Kenneth still wants to be a player,

'I would love to stay here and see the business be successful.....' (INT: 1205 – 1207)

Once centre stage, now perhaps on the periphery.

Overview of Kenneth's performance

Kenneth had a laid back approach and throughout the performance had a cup of tea. He was comfortable and had no suit jacket or tie on. He could tell a great story and captivated the audience, deviating from the main story throughout to tell mini stories; as a result, his performance ran over by an hour. His blackberry was on during the performance and he actually took a call and asked me to pause recording. I could empathise a lot with this character and it was easy to become entangled in his stories. Kenneth very much enjoyed being on stage, he is a crowd pleaser.

Malcolm

Malcolm has been with the business for many years and has seen it through many evolutions,

'...my involvement with business services is limited to only a few short years, of [over 15 years], [laughs](INT: 14).

He has steadily worked his way through the ranks,

'I started as a workshop foreman and then as I say the rest is history' (INT: 57-62)

This was not uncommon, a lot of the main players in the organisation of the past had this type of background, starting as apprentices and ending up as directors. Malcolm believed that leaving school with little qualifications had been a stumbling block for him,

*'..... my **one regret in life is I didn't apply myself**, and I think **I am very, very fortunate to be where I am....** it has **been a hard slog** and in particular when **you don't have some of the basic ingredients that you need as you move forward and you move up from working with your hands**so there **must have been something in me to do it**, and I only wish I had applied myself when I was younger but I didn't and that's where we are' (INT: 69 – 90).* Awareness of strengths and weaknesses is important to him, *'.....I've always been **cautious of my own ability**, I've **always been ambitious but never too ambitious....**'* (INT: 69 – 90).

When applying for his latest position he sought advice from his seniors to ensure this wasn't a step too far by saying,

'..... don't massage my ego, I'm big boy I understand if you don't think I've got what it takes please don't put me down the path where you think I might fail' (INT: 128 – 139) and this honesty is key to Malcolm, *'....I very much work on the basis of being **open and honest, maybe too honest**, to open but that's the way I've worked all my life....' (INT: 128 – 139).....'I am **open and honest and I'm challenging**, I'm sometimes **not politically correct**, I'm **sometimes a little bit abrupt**, I wear my heart on my sleeve, but whatever the positives are must outweigh the negatives otherwise I would be here today talking to you' (279 – 281).*

Team at all levels has always been important to Malcolm at all levels,

*'I make that quite clear and **I am only as good as the people who work for me**, and I always make sure that I've got a strong team, **it's the team that will succeed it's not me**'* (INT 255 260).

Malcolm appears to be centre stage.

Overview of Malcolm's performance

Although senior, Malcolm was very down to earth and honest. He emphasised the importance of having an awareness of his strengths and weaknesses throughout. When told that he could have a copy of his performance, he asked if he had to have it, there was a reluctance to have a record of it.

The performance

There are three main Acts to the performance:

- Structure and processes
- Roles
- Knowledge and communication

Each Act will be played out on paper.

Act one: Structure and processes

Scene one: The production

Featuring: Six director level social actors and one non-director social actor. Graham, Martin, Pete, Jack, Rick, Patricia and Rebecca took part in the scene, Graham, Rick and Patricia were centre stage; Pete, Martin and Rebecca were backstage; and Jack was on the periphery.

Change was a regular feature within this successful organisation. However, the organisation was structured in a way, which appeared to create silos. It was thought that these encouraged internal competition as divisions were working against, rather than with each other. As **Rebecca** explained:

'.....it was independently run and managed so they had their own back office function, and their own set of processes and procedures for doing things'(PIL: 110 – 117).

It was evident that the divisions did not understand fully the purpose of the organisation and as such they often had poor interdepartmental communications. During my exploratory discussions, **Judy's** perspective on this was:

'.... (I don't think) we were ever properly geared towards sharing information at all because there was quite a lot of internal competition. So moving towards one overall business structure has helped with that and it should continue to do so' (PIL: 173).

The organisation was restructured internally in order to continue to grow and survive, and, in theory, to move away from silos operating as competitive individual parts. Many expressed a concern that the restructuring created new silos as opposed to eradicating them. In particular, **Jack** was concerned that the restructure had not prevented individuals from empire building. He said:

'..... we may have broken down the barriers and changed the shape of the business, but in some ways there's a danger that we've created different silos' (INT: 791 – 793).

To prevent empire building, **Graham** believed that all directors should look at the whole picture. He said:

'it's not about sitting over there [the departure lounge] head down 8 till whenever you finish doing stuff that's solely related to what you do in the business but to get to the level I've got is an opportunity to get involved in all aspects of the business. You have to grasp that and say that if something comes along and again it's looking at the bigger picture I suppose it's that as well its throwing yourself out it's a bit like a telescope that you can zoom in and you have to continually do that' (INT: 654 – 667), '..... a lot of people not so much set up their own empires, but they get into a way of working that's very isolated and if they continue in that manner sometimes it's not to the benefit of the company, so again its having that wider vision to see that yes you have to look after your own area but you have to look at how it impacts on other areas' (INT: 1128 – 1132).

Graham suggested that individuals should be part of the overall production rather than focusing all of their efforts on the side shows where they feature as main stage actors.

Martin appeared to agree with Graham, although he seemed more sympathetic to supporting the side shows. He said:

'people say you get into a silo, and that has been an issue, you get into your silo and you don't know what's going on' (INT: 152 – 154).

Pete exemplifies Martin's point by expressing that he did not appear to have a good understanding of what was going on in other parts of the organisation. He said:

'I don't have a clue what they are doing in [another division of the business]. (INT: 875 – 876), 'I don't know it so well, Susan I'm maybe giving you the wrong impression here I know enough about the business to get myself by, I know what's right and I know what's wrong, and I know what we need to achieve' (INT: 1059 – 1063), [another director in the same team] has got his own set of issues I should think he's worried about, not about really interested in what Pete is doing' (INT: 1014 – 1016).

He viewed his project as a separate business but realised that this was unsustainable. He said:

'There needs to come a point where you bring it together, bring the people together which is the point we're making.' (INT: 1102 – 1103)..... 'we don't learn, all we're focussing on is our little chunk of business' (INT: 1110 – 1111), 'You automatically mentally create silos in your own mind, you don't mean to, my baby is [my project] and 'this is the way we do it', 'But they (senior directors) haven't discouraged me from doing what I'm doing, nobody said Pete, stop what you're doing.' (INT: 853 – 854). He appears to cope with the change by focusing on his project, rather than the whole performance, 'it's (the changes) just noise, now I can't influence what [the Managing Director] is doing at that level and his thought process.' (INT: 910-912).

The individuals considered that these mental and physical silos had led to sub goals, competition between divisions and fragmented patterns of thoughts and actions. Some would say that there was little sharing of knowledge between the different parts of the organisation with individuals pursuing their own goals as ends in themselves and the organisation proper being guided towards informal ends, which were the opposite to those designed for the organisation. There were many practical issues associated with the general pace of change and rapid expansion of the organisation, which meant that the organisation had not been able to reconfigure itself after acquisitions and winning contracts. Consequently, there were many

differing processes and procedures and such as information technology were located on different platforms.

Rebecca associated this with the pace of change,

'.....we've grown so much and we've not been able to put the right processes in place while we've grown we've got a lot of staff doing a lot of different things'(PIL: 110-113)

These issues meant that many individuals found it difficult to understand how the organisation operated. As **Pete** put it, they *'struggled with the lack of process [in the organisation]* (INT: 712). He echoed Rebecca's comments by adding that the organisation had:

'entrepreneurial spirit....the people were there but the processes weren't.... (INT: 43). '.....because [the organisation] in terms of their process it doesn't exist it's not visible people can't see it... that's the risk when your bringing new people into the business although they can inject a new life into it a lot of them are struggled with the lack of processes' (INT: 710 – 714), ' there's process in place but it's not standard or common throughout the whole business....' (INT: 44 – 48). Pete has faith that things will improve, 'I think the changes they're making at the moment these are just interim, there will be further changes to come, but yes I have faith in what they do, you have to' (INT: 666 – 669).

He alluded to a degree that the structures and processes were tacit and intangible, and were embedded in the minds of the longer serving, experienced individuals of which he was one. **Rick** discussed how the organisation used to function. He said:

'...success was driven by being fiercely competitive charging after every bit of business and then working really hard to make that work and I think we continue to be like that, and I think we're trying to find where it

sits at the moment, because we kind ofas you get bigger there's less control and we are trying to make sure that it still fits with where we are culturally' (INT: 514 – 531).

He outlined the aggressive approach, which had been adopted previously, to gain new business. However, he highlighted, also, that people struggled to cope with this approach and its impact on their roles.

Jack believed that the way in which the organisation was operating was unhealthy. He said:

'.....it wasn't sustainable, you can't have 3 different competing, duplicating businesses in a business that size you just can't it was crazy, so yes I think it was the right thing' (INT: 1026 – 1028).

Patricia's role was to tackle the issues mentioned by Pete and Jack. She said:

'so we've got to get the processes mapped get people to understand this is how you do the business whether you like it or not if you don't like it and you're not going to do it then you know where to go, but that's what we've got to do, this is the way we've got to run a business because its extra cost if you're not all doing the same, if we don't have consistent processes throughout then you run the risk of just duplication of effort' (INT: 323 – 327).

Patricia's matter of fact approach to the restructuring suggested that, if individuals did not agree with the new ways of working then, they would no longer be welcome as part of the production. The show had changed but the previous actors were still in place. She was unsure of her future because of the changes. However, her choice of language was very matter of fact:

'I have to just wait and see what opportunities come from this deal, I think it is quite an exciting deal and we'll see what happens' (INT: 686 –

689), *'Oh yeah, I'd like to be here to see the transaction go through'* (INT: 695).

From the early days in her career, there was a heavy reliance on managing costs at a local level. Her reputation of being good at this was important to her and she said:

'..... it comes as a shock when I come in here [current organisation], we balanced our books we knew to the penny on [a regular occurrence] what we had made, you were tracked people knew 'oh that shift did well', 'oh that shifts rubbish', and who was on that shift, 'she's good, he's good, he's duff he sits on his backside and did nothing, so the responsibility of that' (50 – 65).

She went on to dealing with cost savings at a corporate level with a no nonsense approach by saying:

'we had a plan which took out 1600 people and [a substantial amount of money] worth of fat you could say, but that involved things like selling off the corporate jets, because you think well the chief executive doesn't need a corporate jet and a spare so we'll get rid of those' (INT: 96 – 101). '.....the fat was right at the top, the fat was all at the top, so we took it out at the top..... you still need the craftsmen you still need the fitters, joiners, linesmen, in fact you need more of them, so we didn't get rid of any of them, much to some of their disgust because I think they would get great big packages, but they didn't' (INT: 101– 111).

Her language talking about 'taking out' conjured up images of a sniper shooting the enemy. You could begin to build a picture of why Patricia was recruited in to her current role, given the restructuring. Being new to the production, she had new perspectives and could adopt the role of 'stranger' to reveal aspects, which had become engrained and taken for granted by longer serving employees. She said:

' I will ask the questions you know what's actually happening here, like meetings and travel what are we delivering here what's the aim of what we're doing.... we want to know how much we're spending on meetings, travel and accommodation flights the whole thing.... how can

we run our meetings more effectively, is there a better way.... right let's find out how much we're spending, it's a horrific amount we're spending, and you think that can't be possible, do people have to travel to London in the morning for a one hour meeting and come back at night costing 350 pounds because they just decided the day before they had to nip down to London, that's absolutely ridiculous, they could do it on a video conferencing..... they don't have to get up at the crack of dawn and get home late at night, they've got more leisure time, ok they don't get their air miles but tough (laughs)(INT: 395 – 414).

Martin was frustrated by the travelling and said:

'Well when you spend time travelling you tend to do it in your own time, which extends the day, I spend I'm probably away from home 2 nights a week I would imagine, getting to your bed a half past 3 on a Monday morning' (INT: 218 – 220).

This provides an example of the consequences of being a part of the production and the impact on his personal life.

Graham appeared to echo Patricia's views by saying:

'.....I think we're short here in terms of lack of consequence, because I don't think there's a governance here so if I do something particularly bad or manage in a way that doesn't relate to the values of the company, so what?' (INT: 571 – 574). 'It's about the behaviours, they exhibit, you can't measure values, but you can manage, there's certain observable behaviours for instance....', (on an employee engagement mechanisms that directors lead on) '.....now there is a report goes out on a monthly basis it identifies, its names and shames basically, the winners and losers are all up there as well as the bad boys, and there's a number of people are clearly identified in there, and that goes back to the point I was saying about governance if my name is up there 3 times and I've missed all my visits since January, then somebody should have spoken to me by now.' (INT: 629 – 634).

He appeared to believe there were few consequences for not playing all aspects of the formal role, and that, if social actors did not play their entire role, it would

damage the overall production. He discussed peoples' options in dealing with the change, which seemed quite clear cut to him by saying:

'There's always an impact when something changes, now that impact can be positive or negative or it can be a bit of both, I suppose it's about how you managed it' (INT: 138 – 143), '..... to ignore things or to bury your head in the sand is when change is going to affect you more seriously and more negatively than if you embrace it (INT: 154 – 158), '.... some people are more receptive to change than others, people do things because of the consequences, they're either trying to have good outcome or they're avoiding a bad outcome' (INT: 552 – 554).

Not all social actors had the same position on stage as Graham. Therefore he might have been privy to more information and was able to better understand the rationale for changes and their impact on his role. Prior to the major change taking place, **Rebecca** gave her views on how she thought these would be played out. She said:

(on the restructure) '.....I think what you will probably find is that the people who are the saboteurs for this sort of culture, will find themselves more and more isolated within the business and I don't mean that they will be forced out. It will become a culture that will not suit their way of working. And I think that they will probably leave naturally. So I think I you will, you know once you have got rid of the people who are having the negative impact, replacing them with people who are coming in to accept this culture from day one, it will definitely improve' (PIL: 327).

Rebecca revealed something about the possible darker side of the organisation with individuals deliberately working against the formal structures and processes for their own gains. Shortly after the interviews took place, the most significant organisational change occurred. The organisation was acquired and merged into a larger organisation. This was a very uncertain period, which I discussed in my diary as follows:

'.....How many changes are you expected to live through as an employee of an organisation? Two weeks ago, our company was

purchased by another larger company and the lead up to it was awful. My whole team seemed to be on edge as they were fearful of their jobs. Speculation was rife, nobody knowing what was going on, not trusting of one another in many cases, things seemed quite competitive with certain individuals vying for attention, to showcase their talents and make themselves known. The truth is, there were lots of questions but few answers. Nothing much has changed since the new lot came on board, in the sense that we still don't have answers, my feeling is that they will still come in and railroad the business with their way of doing things but it kind of feels like bastardisation' (REF: 6106 – 6116).

When reflecting on my views, it was apparent that by the point of making this diary entry (towards the end of the time in the organisation), I had gone native, become 'one of them' as demonstrated by the 'them' and 'us' attitude displayed and the fear of losing identity. The organisation had gone through a circular process; it started off small, grew quite quickly and was acquired by a larger company. This same situation occurred again in the time during which I was part of the organisation. Some social actors appeared to struggle with these changes, and others thrived.

Rick commented on the changes by saying:

'...previously we were in these silos and we made money, now we're in these silos and we make a bit more money..... standing back from where we're at, companies restructure all the time, the success of that is less dependent on the lines on the new graph and its more dependent on the behaviours that people within those lines elicit to make it work or don't work, now there's a whole host of stuff you need to manage' (INT: 222 – 232). 'the whole change management thing in there and bringing people with you and making sure you've got the message understood, and execute the strategy that's attempting to be executed, that's all there, but ultimately silos are created by people not by..... they can be helped or hindered by the lines on an organ gram, but it's the people that create the silos it's the people who put their arms around it, it's the people that either withdraw or engage, so I'm almost at the point that says yes we've changed and we'll change again, and two years from now we'll change again hopefully if we get it right, and the company will continue to grow.....' (INT: 232 – 243).

As someone that had progressed through the organisation, he appeared to have social competence, and an understanding of the formal and informal aspects of the

culture. Also, he identified the importance of individual's motivations and behaviours, regardless of the formal processes and structures. His concern was the mental silos as opposed to the physical and structural silos.

Scene two: The stage

Featuring: Six director level social actors took part in the scene - Graham, Sarah, Pete, Kenneth, Jack, and Patricia. Patricia, Graham and Sarah were centre stage; Pete was backstage; and Jack and Kenneth were on the periphery.

The production takes place within the top floor of the headquarters, based in Scotland. It is set within the open plan area, which was renamed 'the departure lounge', by many staff due to the turnover of senior level staff. Similarly, when directors moved on from the organisation, these were referred to as 'departures'. It could not be assumed, because directors were located within this area, that they all had a total understanding of what was going on within the organisation. Not all had 'real' insider knowledge. As such, they did not all assume centre stage, that is, they were not all main characters. Some were more comfortable with this setting than others and were able to use this physical space to their advantage.

Pete was not always comfortable in being located in the same area as the other directors. He said:

'.... the atmosphere is a lot better now, I was given a seat up there [the departure lounge] at the start of the year and I used to come up whenever I was in the office [headquarters] and it was only about a dozen or so people in a big space [there never used to be any spare seats, many people moved on] and I thought 'this isn't the kind of environment I want to work' in so I used to just go and sit with the guys and take any old desk' (INT: 958 – 961).

He spoke of 'the guys', implying that he was more comfortable with the team, which he managed as opposed to the senior team, which he did not really feel part of. He reflected on a television programme, which had prompted his thoughts on the layout, by saying:

'.....I saw a programme last week, it was a company that was getting their head office redeveloped, a really, really old company, their structure was that their directors tended to sit in the corner of the building that gave them the most light and tended to be on the top floor, and then a set of consultants came in and came up with this scheme where the directors were all put together centrally, no partitioning, because it gave the impression that they were part of the business and that they were open and receptive to people coming in that's is what I think they were trying to create there, they're very much the central hub of the operation, it doesn't come across like that when you immediately go up there, it does feel slightly elite' (INT: 918 – 926).

Jack did not particularly like the office layout for practical reasons. As he said:

'It's funny, I've not worked in open plan before, but I don't like it, it's not that I have a low attention threshold but when I need to concentrate, I need to concentrate and I find it quite hard in that environment, I also think it should encourage more dialogue than it does, I think people are less prone to talk, because you can't just sit and have a chat like this because you think 'whose there?', and you can't have a private conversation where you can be above a whisper and I don't think that's natural and I think people talk less because of it' (INT: 451 – 456), '.....and it does make it that harder because your natural tendency is to talk to the people around you and its interesting when used to sit over there, until about 2 weeks ago I sat right there, and [a director] and I used to talk a lot but we talk less now, and I've only moved about 20 feet, it was a bit of banter and stuff but it was business stuff as well and in two weeks what are we not talking about that we used to talk about that would be useful you know?' (INT: 488 – 493).

The formal rationale for the physical structure appeared not to support the informal or formal ways of communicating. Although physically close to people, perhaps, they were actually less close due to the lack of privacy in the area.

Jack found the reliance on formal meetings frustrating. He said:

' I've never worked in a business where you have so many meetings, and it comes back to open plan, we seem to need culturally to set up a meeting to talk about something rather than just go and see someone and talk about it, and the problem is once you've started it you can't see someone because they're always in meetings, and the only way to talk to them is to set a meeting up.....' (INT: 532 – 536), 'the other thing is it's one thing to set up a meeting but they need to be efficient meetings as well, the business I was astonished when I first joined, we don't as a matter of course take actions at meetings, we're not good at that, we not very good at starting and saying right what are we going to get out of this, just basic stuff (INT: 579 – 587), 'I think it probably does depend on your training and experience, so professionally trained people will want to see that kind of discipline and expect minutes or actions or something' (INT: 595 – 596).

Jack had to go to extreme measures to get work done. He said:

'I ask myself when do you get any work done!' (INT: 630), '..... there's a couple of things I do one is once ever couple of weeks I spend a day working at home, which is great peace and quiet, I do try to if I'm going down to London for something I'll go down for a couple of days and spend some time in London and get some peace and quiet to get some work done there, it's a radical decision, and occasionally I'll even try blocking time in my diary and put day of work?' (INT: 649 – 653).

The formal communication interaction mechanisms appeared to hinder Jack in achieving his role. Consequently, whilst he needed to communicate to fulfil his role, he seemed to spend more time doing so and less time on his work, the reason for his employment.

Sarah had a positive outlook on the office layout and compared it to her previous organisation with a traditional structure with offices, and where peers were:

'sat in their own offices, so they were always a bit removed from you, you always had to knock on their door to see them' (INT: 286 – 290).

The open plan office had clear benefits for **Sarah**. As she said:

'I guess when I first joined [the managing director] was slightly daunting but now I meet with him so often that he's actually, and probably sitting open plan as well, everybody walks past there is no airs and graces here, and anybody can come and see us, and I'll pop along and see anyone you're not anybody special just because you're a director, so it's quite good that it is open' (INT: 257 – 263).

This visibility and access appeared to be important for Sarah in achieving her formal and informal roles.

Graham had, also, a positive outlook on the layout of the office. He said:

'For me it's about this involvement in the rest of the business, that's it's not just about what we do as a team, I think it can be quite easy, certainly when I sat down stairs, that I could come in and beaver away and still get things done, but I was missing out on a lot of the interaction and wider issues that I needed to know about for my position in the business, so obviously when the opportunity came to move upstairs then that was a positive thing, ok and certainly now rather than having formal meeting I can have informal chats, and a lot of stuff in business is done informally and it's about being there, and again its being approachable for these guys as well you have to be seen in the business, not only, first of all you have to do what you meant to do, but secondly you have to be seen to be doing it so it gives them the opportunity to just come and have a chat, and again it's about building this network of relationships so I get to know them a bit more about their personal lives' (INT: 855 – 866).

His views were similar to **Sarah's**; he liked the informal interactions and saw the need to be accessible and to build relationships. His role meant that he was able to see what was happening across the business. He thought this was key by saying:

'it's like a triangle, there's lots of things at the bottom, or an iceberg is probably a better description, there's a lot of stuff under the water, and there's this wee part that we see as directors, particularly if you're sitting here [in Scotland], and we've got this view there's this small part of the iceberg that sits above the water and in actual fact there's hundreds of things going on below it' (INT: 371 – 380).

His mental strengths and metaphoric understandings combined within an understanding of the rationale for the production equipped **Graham** to survive and thrive.

Kenneth's position on stage was important to him. As he said:

'having position even a palm position is probably more valuable to me than earning twice my salary' (INT: 686 – 687), 'it's not just the money thing, it's more about feeling important and being positioned in a business, that's probably more important to these guys than anything else' (INT: 717-720), '..... people look at me and think he must be in that inner circle and I'm not, there are only two people in that inner circle.....' (INT: 947 – 949), 'Only a few people in the business matter.... people will be pissed off that I have a seat next to [a director].... I'm confident that they will try and move me' (INT: 956 – 958), (on seating) 'you've no idea the influence these things have, you know [other directors] will think 'well move them from there to there', and they will try and do that, and that's the kind of stuff that would make me leave, you know nothing to do with your salary or your name or title or anything else it will be something stupid like that' (INT: 964 – 969).

Perception and status, which were non verbal aspects of the cultural scenario, were important to Kenneth, perhaps even more important than the financial benefits of being part of the organisation.

Patricia found it difficult to adapt to the open plan directors area. As she said:

'.....the culture of not having a desk, of not having your own office, I used to have my own office and your secretary would sit outside and guard your door' (INT: 222-225),

She felt slightly exposed in this unguarded area. Her language was quite military like, mentioning the 'guarding her door' as well as her discussion about 'taking out' staff like a sniper.

Act two: Roles

Scene one: Being a director

Featuring: Five director level social actors took part in the scene – Kenneth, Rick, Graham, Pete and Jack. Graham and Rick were centre stage; Pete was backstage; and Jack and Kenneth on the periphery.

The social actors within this story were employed in a part of a large service driven public limited company, which was a rapidly expanding, ambitious and geographically spread across the UK and Ireland. There were many directors within the organisation with varying levels of responsibility, from account directors, who managed contracts with clients to executive directors and, also, the managing director who had overall responsibility for managing the organisation. The social actors had mixed professional backgrounds, some were 'internally' promoted to their posts, some joined from external organisations, and some were combinations of the two having been externally educated and internally trained. Title and job role had differing meanings to individuals.

Rick joked about the director population by saying:

'We've got hundreds of directors in here....' [Whispers: I'm not a real director] (INT: 366), before going on to provide insights into why there were quite so many, '.....quite a lot of people have struggled all their lives to get to director role, if we were to say, 'we're changing you to senior manager' [as part of a restructure]) they would be 'oh wait a minute', so when it comes to a decision on that unfortunately you've got to accept the reality of where you are with it and you balance it with the impact at the moment versus the benefit I guess the feeling of the impact is not detrimental' (INT: 502 – 507).

He believed that title was so important to individuals and that it would be very harmful if I removed the director's badge from some.

For **Rick**, personally, title did not appear important. It was almost like his key to unlock access to opportunities; it provided him with the authority to tailor his role. As he said:

'I'm not bothered what I'm called but the job itself is right for me at this stage in my career it's absolutely bang on I've got enough leverage, responsibility, influence, I can do more if I wanted to I'm paid ok and I'm quite happy with that thanks' (INT: 409 – 422).

His humorous approach provided the following example of a counterpart's approach to the title:

'....without naming names there's a guy who currently reports to me will pick up the phone and say 'I'm a director you know', and I say 'you're not, you're a bawbag!' (INT: 407-409).

He appeared to have managed his career progression, staying with organisations long enough to make a visible impact. As he said:

'..... if you look at my CV I've typically got a 3 year tenure, in most roles, the one I had before, in [past organisation] it was about 10 minutes (laughs) but not through choice' (INT: 380 – 381), 'and were you able to be there for any length of time that you actually influenced anything, as you get into more senior roles then the expectation would be that you wouldn't be jumping every two or 3 years, 18 months will take me a bit closer to 5 years here' (INT: 393 – 396).

Rick liked to be interested in the work that he was undertaking, *' I've been able to do alright and actually have a career in jobs that remain interesting'* (INT: 400-414). His current role was providing this interest, which was the reason why he stayed with the organisation longer than he normally would.

As the following shows, performance reviews were important for him:

‘ yes it is important, not just because I have a sappy personality that demands love and adoration (laughs) (INT: 653 – 676).

Having this feedback enabled him to alter his performance if required to continue to survive and thrive. As the following shows, his director role, been given him a lot of freedom to make changes:

‘accepting that I have had the opportunity of having a senior role and I’ve been allowed to pretty well restructure all that we’re doing in [functional department] at the moment, having great fun, and you know the role that I created for two other people and myself the new structure I think makes an awful lot of sense and I think we will tinker with it and play about with it this year and next year’ (INT: 313 – 317), ‘ I’ve got enough leverage responsibility influence, I can do more if I wanted to....’ (INT: 368).

He was able to make changes as he had knowledge of the overall performance and had the authority to be able to make suggestions. The title of director appeared to be quite significant to some. As **Pete** explained:

‘....some people’s heads disappear up their own arses when they become a director’, before going on to discuss the important implications of the job title, ‘..... it depends how you use it, I’ve got no problem with people having an ambition to have that in their job title and I’ve got no problem with people enjoying status but the thing is what do you do with it, does and how that impact on people who work for you and stuff and you’ve got to be aware you carry, regardless of where you’ve come from if your now in a position of authority then the things you do and the things you say have an impact on the people who work for you and they make judgments about you on that’ (INT: 215-220), ‘..... it’s nice having a directors title at the end of the day, but it carries with it a lot of responsibilities’ (INT: 223 – 231).

He highlighted that, whilst a job title could empower an individual, it could, also, cause harm, if misused.

Jack's role, also, brought with it a certain degree of power. He said:

'One of the great things about being in a [professional department] is there is almost nothing that you can't ask for, and people say why do you want that, and I say well why can't I have it, I'm the 'professional department' director I've got to understand what's going on in that business and there's very few people will say no if you ask them' (INT: 816 – 819).

Responsibility and acknowledgement were important to **Kenneth**:

'but I loved building something and seeing it finished and saying that great you know I 'did that', even now I still enjoy a finished project, I need to deliver something, I think you need to deliver something I couldn't be the kind of person that was part of a process, that really wouldn't work for me' (INT: 138 – 141), 'If I was pulled in to do A to B and then had to hand it on to somebody else, I really wouldn't be happy with it, I really like it when I'm part of the decision making process and deliver something tangible, and people say Kenneth built that, or Kenneth's was part of the team built that, I need that, that's, really, really important to me' (INT: 147 – 150).

He truly believed that he had made an impact within the organisation by saying:

' the business has changed dramatically since I came on board, now that's because of me alone but I honestly believe that in my heart that I influenced that' (INT: 513 – 515).

Although **Kenneth** was not on centre stage, the following shows that he believed that his position, always, has been a fortunate one:

'I was always on the periphery of it and I always had a wee influence on it and I felt part of it and I have learned a lot from it and all those things that I have learned and seen I can reproduce in other businesses now' (INT: 1003 – 1007).

Graham was on centre stage and had a good relationship with those, who created the script for the production. As he said:

'.....there are things that probably because of my position..... I'm probably sort of in a sort of better position not promise as much but I can say quite categorically that I'll get something done and it probably will be done, and that's about making sure that when you promise that you actually deliver at the other end, I'm very, very comfortable about doing that when I say I'll be doing something It will be done.....' (INT: 269 – 275).

His role and title provided him with power and influence.

Scene two: Roles based on strengths and weaknesses

Featuring: Seven director level social actors took part in the scene – Martin, Kenneth, Graham, Pete, Jack, Patricia and Sarah. Graham, Patricia and Sarah were centre stage; Pete and Martin were backstage; and Kenneth and Jack were on the periphery.

The majority of the social actors believed greatly in knowing personal strengths and weaknesses. Some were scared of failure because of the consequences associated with this, whilst for others it was more about using their strengths to exploit situations.

Malcolm held a very senior role but, always, had been cautious of his own ability. As he said:

'I've always been ambitious but never too ambitious and I've always believed the last thing I would want to do or anybody should do would have aspirations beyond their capabilities because once you take that step there's only one route then and its back down that ladder, because you don't take one step back if you take it, it can impact on your for the rest of your life so I've got confidence in myself but I've always wanted to have the comfort that whoever I've worked for has believed that I've got potential and between me and them they think ok this is right for me' (INT: 80 – 88).

Although in a senior position, the following demonstrates that, initially, **Malcolm** never thought that he was the right candidate for his role:

' I didn't aspire to the main role, because I thought that was definitely one step too far.....' (INT: 106 – 119).

He was so concerned about the consequences of failure at a senior role that he broached the subject with his boss before applying for the position. As he said:

‘ prior to being interviewed I said to my boss, [board member] ‘Christ please don’t suggest that I apply for this job if you yourself don’t think I can do the job, don’t massage my ego, I’m big boy I understand if you don’t think I’ve got what it takes please don’t put me down the path where you think I might fail, I would rather you be open with me and if you bring in somebody to be my boss, and as long as I can respect that boss I’m happy with your decision then I will work for him, if I don’t then I’ve got a choice.....’, he said no I think you should apply for the job I think you’ve got what it takes but it’s up to others, so I went through that proves and it worked, biggest surprise of my life I was in a hotel and I get a call congratulations, and it was great, it was fantastic, and then when the adrenaline you think what happens now?’ (INT: 127 – 138).

Initially, he had worked his way through the ranks by saying that:

‘.....started as a foreman and ended up as director’ (INT: 61), ‘ the business took faith in me’ (INT: 96).

Although this approach was successful in his case, he thought organisations should heed the following warning:

‘..... whilst I’ve been fortunate had the business done the right thing in the first place to allow that sort of thing to happen maybe that’s a lesson to be learnt as well for businesses, that you need to have progression that you can’t always promote from within but it’s nice if you can show that kind of progression and opportunity’ (INT: 88 – 95).

He believed that new perspectives, skills and experiences were required to keep the production relevant and appealing.

Similarly, **Graham** highlighted the issues of promoting people through the ranks by saying:

'I had somebody who was promoted from an electrician..... he had suddenly become a working supervisor, but he has suddenly become a non working supervisor so he was actually more of a first line middle manager, that guy didn't have the skills to manage that team, he could manage them technically, but he was faced with a team of 10 guys very, very experienced guys who probably in their 40's 50's been in the industry a long time, culturally were very developed in the way they worked, he was a young guy he didn't have the skills or the credibility to turn that around to lead that team or even get them to doing anything in particular he wanted' (INT: 437 – 444), 'and I suppose that's about getting the right people in the right positions which we don't always do' (INT: 287 – 288).

Consequently, he highlighted that not all social actors have the skills, knowledge and experiences to undertake promoted roles, which is not necessarily a bad thing so long as they do not take on a role, which they cannot fulfil. Perhaps this is the reason for focussing on knowing personal capabilities. Graham progressed quickly within the organisation and reflection and learning appeared important in assisting Graham to understand and progress. Commenting:

'When I came in I was head of a small team, that team was about 4 or 5 people, about 6 months later I was appointed to director now I've got a team of about 40' (INT: 128 – 129), ' but you have to be of the nature to take it I suppose as constructive criticism for the want of a better words, and really look at when your evaluated in the likes of the 360 degree feedback that you actually take time to be open and honest with yourself to say or discuss it with somebody that's had that opinion and you might turn around and say oh yes I actually do realise what you're saying now and you can make a conscious efforts to change things' (INT: 1101 – 1113), 'if I come to work every day and don't learn something then there's something seriously wrong,..... it's about travelling it's about seeing things from their perspective, and sometimes it does you have to actually take yourself physically and say I'm not looking at it from directors eyes let's look at it from the point of these guys here.....' (INT: 391 – 398).

Always, **Kenneth** has been a driven character. As he said:

'I'm ambitious, I'm quite determined to do some stuff' (INT: 279), 'Maybe desperation, I don't really know, looking back on it now, I was just determined to better myself, because probably the background I had' (INT: 95 – 96).

This determination meant that he had to be intuitive in his approach to different situations:

'and working in a [different market] for the first time I knew I had to act differently, before I could probably manipulate people and manage people with being nice and being decent, and being seen as the guy who does the work alongside them, I mean I used to help them off load lorries and all that kind of stuff..... (INT: 247 – 250).... 'It's probably a failing, more than anything else, it means that you don't impose your personality right from day one, some guys would come into an office and move someone and say office and say I'm sitting here because I'm the boss, I tend to be a bit soft on my approach which isn't good for my business point of view', (INT: 256 – 259). Although he has had an awareness of his strengths, 'I'm a good ideas guy' (INT: 520), '.....all the things that I was good at, good with people, good with customers, good with sales, good with engineering' (INT: 324 – 326) he was once 'unique and valuable' (INT: 557).

However, when the business began to change direction, **Kenneth** was aware that he was no longer as valuable. As he said:

'I never had the kind of strategic experience that would have been necessary there' (INT: 779 – 784), 'I couldn't have sat down and said oh we're moving into this area and its devaluing the business, I don't have that skill' (INT: 784 – 785). To be part of this senior team, 'you would need to live and breathe it and work right across the whole business, be very dynamic, very ruthless, be very clever, and probably had experience of a huge organisation', (INT: 779 – 784) and 'I don't have the kind of final killer instinct and you will find that when I speak to people at the top of these organisations I have always found that they're absolutely focused on what they do, and absolutely really finish something off' (INT: 36-40).

He had accepted that he was not equipped to undertake a main role within the main production by saying:

' [the managing director] intellect wise is miles above me, its premier league stuff, I'm first division [he's] premier league..... so these people were brought into the business so at that point I became less and less valuable..... so we're now moving into the next area, you don't take your guy from Patrick Thistle and move him into Rangers, you take your team as they are and you go forward', (INT: 638 – 648), ' it was the right decision, the executive board, , the people on the [governing body] have to deliver something unique and none of us could do that, [the managing director] could, the [executive director] could, the rest of the people on that board shouldn't be there, and [the managing director] realised that' (INT: 755 – 758).

Even with this realisation, he was still hugely loyal and hopeful, although he would not have a main role, that he would have an important one. As the following shows, he acknowledged that he would not be underhand, suggesting others would, indicating an unorthodox aspect of the culture:

'I play by the rules, that's maybe a failing in my makeup as well, and I am very loyal. I would never do anything to damage this business and I would certainly do nothing to damage [managing director] or [executive director] or any of the team because I am very, very loyal' (INT: 1011 – 1114), '.....they're going to need people who they can trust, and this is the thing that's going to happen it's not happened yet, it's certainly happened with [the managing director], and it will happen with other people in the business, they will realise my value at some point and they will ask me to help them to deliver, there is people in this business who are rated at a certain level who aren't trustworthy, who won't deliver and they will be found out' (INT: 919 – 924), '.... it's already happening.' (INT: 930), 'Because as the business is growing, more and more people are being brought in, a lot of charlatans are getting brought in and by the time that they get found out, I will be well gone and that's a shame' (INT: 1040 – 1042).

He was not ready to move on from the organisation, although he thought it was time to do so by saying:

'.... but I've not got the guts' (INT: 500), 'I have considered leaving for a long time, for about 12 months or something. I can't find anything that inspires me, I need a team of people to inspire me, a business to inspire me, and I have looked around, I have spoken to people and people have approached me and there is nothing out there that I would really like to do' (INT: 975-978).

He appeared stuck in a production, which no longer appeared to have a role for him.

Barbara, also, believed that it was important to be honest about your own abilities by saying:

'I think the important thing is I don't pretend to be something I'm not, I'm not a technical person, I'm not an operator, but my skills are about management, relationship building and making sure our employees are engaged and motivated, and as long as I've got these skills and can manage a team to be honest that's what somebody at this level should have' (INT: 201 – 204).

The following shows that **Jack** realised that he had a different set of qualities to those of the executive director:

'I mean I'm not the guy who'll stand up and do a big presentation and inspire the crowd' (INT: 143 – 144), '[executive director] has got a mind like that Very creative, very innovative, and I'm not, I'm a long way down the scale from that, but innovative enough' (INT: 368 – 369).

He was aware of the changes as they created an opportunity for him to join the organisation. As he said:

'I didn't have a business I ran and if you look at where we've been successful and not successful and moving into the new model, generally its people who have come in fresh and new without baggage and without history, this is how we work in [the organisation] this is what you do get on with it' (INT: 209 – 214), 'new people coming into the business seems to encourage that kind of whole information because they don't have those hang ups' (INT: 839 – 843).

His fresh perspectives, mental strengths and lack of 'baggage' meant that he was able to play a new role within a changing production. Upon joining the organisation, he found it difficult to find out how things worked. As he said:

' there was nothing obvious or clear or there was nowhere really to go, I had 6 weeks of well not doing nothing but just being able to swan around go and get involved in a couple of projects just talk to people and that is very unusual in this business, so that period of just being able to absorb without having to come in and start working and understanding and knowing straight away helped a lot....' (INT: 263 – 268).

He believed that being able to observe informally, interact and build relationships were key to him discovering clues about the cultural scenario. He recommended this approach to support all new social actors by saying:

'but I think it is difficult for people when they do come in, we do the induction programme which I think is good, but I think it's almost that, there isn't a next level induction, when somebody joins then we'll sit them down and talk them through it, if you come in as a new director.... this is how we do thing around here, this is who you talk to, this is who your managers going to be' (INT: 283 – 289).

Like Graham, **Pete** believed feedback on his performance was central to his survival and success.

As he said:

'You need feedback, how else are you going to fucking learn about yourself?' (INT: 1269) and he is keen to learn, '..... I want to soak up, I have kind of given and now I want to now re-educate myself' (INT: 991). Pete understands why things had to change, 'They needed to, they needed to. They weren't able to cope, with the people they had in place with the size of company they now are, they didn't have the skills sets or the right level of competency at senior management level to take it to the next stage. They got as far as they can with the people they had I feel, and we're on a slight downward trend at the moment as a company, definitely' (INT: 639 – 643).

Whilst he personally wanted to learn and adapt, he saw, also, that the production required new actors.

Jack was also aware of his strengths and weaknesses. As he said:

' I'm quite self aware and my wife and I we talk about those things anyway, what we've done all that and stuff so there wasn't much that came out that surprised me..... no it didn't although there were a lot of people who were thoroughly surprised or astonished, or disappointed or delighted but I was quite happy but no it didn't surprise me' (INT: 734 – 739).

His comments showed that his personal and professional roles blurred as he talked with his wife about work related matters. Also, he mentioned the symbolic consequences of actions by saying:

'.....I think they forget the impact, I mean you're talking about the senior the top level executive board in the business, I think they forget everything they say, portray and do communicates to people in a big way I think that's important I think a lot of people don't quite grasp that sometimes.' (INT: 756 – 761).

Scene three: Roles based on flexibility, availability and visibility

Featuring: Five director level and one non director level social actors took part in the scene – Judy, Rick, Sarah, Patricia, Barbara and Kenneth. Patricia and Rick were centre stage; Kenneth was on the periphery and Judy was not on the stage.

Rick was promoted quickly within the organisation and appeared to exploit the change. As he said:

‘Right place right time, there’s been a lot of change in the team there’s been an awful lot of change in terms of the structure and I’ve been fortunate that alongside that, I’ve been able to get to where I am just now’ (INT: 165 – 167).

Sarah acknowledged that being flexible and available was important in being able to develop and that her age and current commitments enabled her to do. As she said:

‘Yes.... I’m young. And I don’t have ties I don’t have kids or anything so I can take the time now I can and I think my view is now there will come a time where I will have other priorities so while I’m young and while I’ve got that thirst for knowledge I should exploit it now, you know because there will come a point where I’m not prepared to work through the night and every weekend.....’ (INT: 510 – 514). (on a female executive director), ‘I guarantee she will come back to her exec role when she’s had the baby, and I think if somebody can do it at that level than it sets the tone for the rest of the business that it’s possible to do both, which is not what you see in a lot of companies so it’s great from that perspective’ (529 – 533).

Sarah acknowledged that it would not be possible, always, to play out her role to the same extreme, although she did believe that she could achieve personal and professional goals. Upon joining the organisation, **Sarah** was promoted to director level within 6 months. As she said:

'..... you get involved in anything and everything because it's such a big business, so I had a kind of steep learning curve, I joined September, then I was promoted in June or July to senior level and that's kind of where I've been since.' (INT: 41-44)*'when I got promoted, and [the managing director] had a chat with me and he did say this is obviously historically a [male dominated sector] and it's very difficult for women to get up the tree, I mean it's more the traditional guys that work their way up the ranks, that have been here for years and years that have very much a [traditional] psyche, and I have come across stuff like that but you get on with it and I think the more people realise well that you're here to stay and you're not actually bothered you just get on with it'* (INT: 47 – 52), *'I think actually maybe because of the profession I've gone into [individuals within her profession] are tough, you're not a sensitive person if you're [in her profession], especially because I was in [an area of expertise], and it's quite a male dominated, there's actually more female [professionals] coming up through the ranks than there is male'* (INT: 64 – 66).

Although traditionally a male dominated environment, she did not appear fazed by it. She had quite an aggressive tone when discussing her perceptions of the situation. As the following demonstrates, she had a highly visible, formal role and, also, had also taken on extra responsibility:

' so people know I'm here so everybody knows who to go to.....' (INT: 157-163).

Being up front, on centre stage guaranteed her exposure to other key people in the organisation, those, who mattered. As she said:

'Because of the kind of job I do I get huge exposure to the business, so I think probably more aware of what's going on just by the nature of the job' (INT: 209 – 211).

Therefore, Sarah's formal role contributed to her view of the organisation and, also, allowed her to be able to identify opportunities and to become involved in a variety of projects, which were not related necessarily to her formal role. As she said:

'I tend to get involved in everything, it's quite funny recently because when we acquired [acquired organisation], they have a [director in same position as Sarah] and when we compared the two jobs, it was like chalk and cheese' (INT: 157 – 163).

Patricia was used to working in a male dominated environment. As she said:

'In my previous role I started there as a graduate trainee, first female [in that role] so I just got used to working with the guys and I think a lot of them probably thought 'who is this woman?', so I had to explain myself more because they didn't believe a woman could do a lot of the things obviously I could probably do them as good as or better than them, and I just worked my way up there' (INT: 36 – 44), 'I find men are probably more easier to deal with than some women, women the contemporaries at my level are just the same. It's not I don't notice their sexuality, they've got a job to do, and I suppose everybody's got their own traits on how they do it, but I don't really see, if I saw some women using ridiculous flirtatious ways you think 'oh that's a bit off', but then you can say well that's part of the tool kit, which I don't actually agree with but if some guy or girl is willing to do that as long as..... I try not to do that I just don't see that's appropriate, but you know that happens' (INT: 241 - 255).

She appeared to prefer working with men and acknowledged that people could use props, albeit sexual ones, to survive and thrive within organisations. Her

circumstances had meant that, always, she had been able to be flexible, (on talking about her past move to another country. As she said:

'well I'm not married so I don't have a husband and children, I had already moved with my job all the time, and I'm not from [a Scottish town] so it wasn't as if my family were in [a Scottish town], I had a good time I enjoyed it, it didn't bother me in the slightest' (INT: 152 – 157).

Her lack of personal ties meant that she could allow her professional role to dominate her life.

By reporting to the senior team, and by being seen to deliver, **Barbara** was able to exploit opportunities. As she said:

'.... I reported direct to an MD [Managing Director], and just got involved in lots and lots of different things (INT: 88), with that said, she doesn't believe that the business works on the basis of 'who you know' (INT: 626), she thinks that 'you've got to do a very good job, you've got to be quite visible' (INT: 626 – 633).

Also, she explained that being sensitive to senior actors' personalities and behaviours was important to survival and progression by saying:

'.....when you're asking about certain issues about [managing director] and [executive director], or the board making decisions you've got to do that at the right time, you've got to understand when actually that question will piss [managing director] off, or you've got to understand when he will be open too.....' (INT: 626 – 633), 'it's about gauging that as well and being sensitive to that' (INT: 626 – 633).

Intuition and experience seemed fundamental to this understanding. Like Rick, **Barbara** had managed her career progression. As she said:

'If I look back at my career this is the longest I've ever been I've never been in a business for any more than two years' (INT: 159 – 160), ' this is the longest I've ever been somewhere, and the reason for that is because it keep challenging me and I keep getting opportunities, if that didn't happen I would have left 4 years ago' (INT: 166 – 168).

The following shows that she understood the practicalities required to progress and was in active pursuit of fulfilling these. As she said;

' if you want to get board level in this business you've got to have two or more functional experiences' (INT: 235 – 239).

Those on centre stage appeared to want more than just to survive, and actively attempted to thrive within the cultural scenario. Barbara was very ambitious and determined and said that:

'I have worked really hard, but it's been a determination, I'm a very planned and organised person in general, and I always have the next plan and I really want to achieve that, and if someone turns round to me and says you're never going to do that, do you know what yes I am, yes, and I guess that I am naturally ambitious and determined..... really early on in my career, I've only once ever not got the promotion that I wanted to get, only once, and they guy said to me come back when your properly qualified and older, and I thought you know what, fuck you, I'm going to do this. I never ever look at things like that, only when I really have to but you think, I'm at a higher level than you, I earn more than you, blah, blah, blah sod you, you knew nothing' (INT: 302-311).

Like Patricia and Sarah, **Barbara** was used to working in male dominated environments in the organisations in which she had been employed previously. As she said:

'..... so it's not something that I haven't worked with before, so in many ways I probably prefer it, guys are probably much easier to deal with in some way, but is a male dominated business particularly at this level and many of these types of businesses that we are in and it's not a concern for me, it's never been a factor' (INT: 168 – 173), 'I suppose a few times just sitting in meetings or, just thinking 'my goodness I'm a young girl sitting here', so yes I guess it has, and I do remember having a conversation with [the executive director] when I took on this role.... I was managing a team that were younger than me, so that was fine, when I took on this role I was going to manage people that were various ages, various experience, so that worried me, well it didn't really worry me it was a concern for me, and we chatted through that through and it's just one of these things 'we're just going to give it a bash', and its worked out fine and its worked out really well' (180 195), 'in my own relationship with my husband....I'm the sort of main bread winner if you want to call it that. Interestingly in my group of friends that's actually the trend.....' (INT: 276 – 279), '.... the age I am just now, been married for years all that kind of thing you've got to you have a bit consideration around that and that it does worry me in the future, you know if we decide that we want to have a family yes it's going to impact very heavily, you know I'm not your typical wife, you know I don't cook, I clean now and again, I'm not there ironing my husband's shirt, I'm not at home every night.....I'm not your typical female wife, and I'm lucky because that hasn't caused problems in my relationship but it's absolutely something you've got to consider, and you know having kids, I still believe there's another couple of years where I get to a point I think well I'm there where I want to be and I know I can come back' (302 - 321).

Scene four: Webs of people

Featuring: Ten director level social actors – Sarah, Pete, Graham, Barbara, Jack, Kenneth, Rick, Malcolm, Patricia and Martin. Malcolm, Patricia, Sarah, Rick, - took part in the scene Barbara and Graham were centre stage; Martin and Pete were backstage; and Jack and Kenneth were on the periphery.

Sarah appeared well connected, both internally and externally and would contact friends and colleagues if she were looking for information. As she said:

'I just pick up the phone to them and they send me articles and bits and bobs, which is just lucky because I know them as my friends from university they just happen to be in different places now' (INT: 543 – 548).

However, she believed that people were more likely to manage their relationships with her, than she did with them. She said:

'I think to be honest probably more of them actively work at the relationship with me, because now all of a sudden I'm a perspective client, I mean one of my friends, she's actually going to be my bridesmaid, one of my friends works at [another company] and she works in the [department] and actually her and her boss came and met myself and [an executive director] down in London, and we've actually instructed them on work and stuff so she came and saw us because we can give them work if you think [this organisation] its quite an impressive client to have, so they came to court me I don't need to court [them] because they want the work so it tends to always work the other way' (INT: 557 – 564).

As the following shows, she believed in face to face interaction for difficult situations with people:

' if you're going to have a difficult conversation or you're going to have a hard negotiation face to face is best way to do it, people are more reasonable if you're looking at them in the eyes, on a phone call or something it's a lot harder to get what you want.... people are more receptive to you as well if people can put a face to the name, they are more likely to responds to you and be more reasonable than if your just at the end of a phone or emails' (INT: 447 – 453).

Also, Sarah enjoyed the interactions with people that require hammering out by saying:

'.....I love the negotiation side of [the organisation] that's what I kind of thrive on more than doing [business related activities that require negotiation] and things like that, I love sitting in a room thrashing out something with the other side.....' (INT: 415 – 417).

Her language was again quite aggressive and due to both her formal and informal roles, she has placed herself in a prime position and access to good networks to tap into. Adding:

'I think I'm in quite a lucky position because I report to the [governing body] I sit on all the [governing body] meetings, so I hear what [governing body] is saying' (INT: 199 – 203 'if there ever is anything I'm uncomfortable with there is always the [counterparts in headquarters] as well that I can run things past, and I tend to meet with them once a month, well just as well to find out what going on at [headquarters] and the other parts of the business, which I think is great as well because I think me attending all the [governing body] and meeting with [headquarters] I've got quite a good knowledge of what's going on the bigger not just [one part of the organisation] its quite good to the bigger picture (INT: 165 – 171).

Having access to the senior people in the organisation is important for **Graham** too. As he said, *'I've got the ear of the MD'* (INT: 269), which he believed helped him to

have an impact within the organisation. Actively building relationships was something in which he seemed particularly skilled, by saying:

'..... you and I might talk about music or something else and we become comfortable with each other and then we might expand that into so what do you think about this within the work situation' (INT: 200 – 209), 'I go and speak to every one of them at the beginning of the week and the end of the week, every week so I'll go over today for instance, and I'll ask them how they're getting on, any problems, what you doing at the weekend again it goes back to this you've got to personally know your people.' (INT: 803 – 811), '..... and they call it bridges and barriers and build as many bridges, because you never know the next day or the next month or the next year when you're going to need to cross that or get somebody to cross back over to you, so it's a about building that network of alliances between people in the company' (INT: 954 – 967).

He was aware that people and relationships were required to enable him to survive and thrive and used 'someone who worked on the tools' as a metaphor to describe, perhaps, his experience and the approach required as a director. As he said:

'I think there's times when you have to dip into, it's like a tool kit, you pull out another tool out your bag but you have to have some tools in the bag to start with and you know what tools do the right job as well, sometimes people have maybe got a spanner that fits one or one size fits all and that's really it and sometimes that's a hammer and a hammer as tradesmen used to call it 'a gentle persuader', and one size does fit all because you basically hammer anything you want either into shape or into position and that not the right way to do it, it's about making sure everything is aligned, if you want to do a proper job which I suppose going back to what you're saying I suppose it's that tradesman thing, and you will see that with good tradesmen, good tradesmen will do it right' (INT: 469 – 486).

He did not think social actors always find the right tool to play their parts. As he said:

' I don't think there's a magic wand you can wave, first of all I think individuals are by the time you get to my age or where you are in business, then you might be hard bitten and sometimes you might have

had a hard deal and sometimes that reflects the way you act (INT: 518 – 522).

Like Graham, the following shows **Jack** believed that it was important to manage relationships:

'if you have relationships then the rest, I think it becomes easier, you'll do something extra and you'll forgive something if you have a relationship..... and secondly when you need a favour or you need a bit of scope on something, where you can say look I've got a problem and it's not the first time you've spoken to them so if you've built that up it gives you an edge, a cushion' (INT: 901 – 908).

Jack managed both internally and externally. As he said:

'I have friends and colleagues and contacts outside the business who I will talk to about problems or challenges what did you when you implemented [a system] or what did you 'dah de dah', or well talk about things as well and I'll maybe say well have you tried that or thought about that' (INT: 886 – 890).

Barbara, also, used her executive level contacts by saying:

' I use [an executive director] a lot, she's still my boss and she's a great sort of area for knowledge as well and she knows a lot of people at senior level and [headquarters] level where you can get that information, but yes I deal with people at [headquarters] to get information from that perspective you know I'm reasonably close to most of the [governing body] around some of their information which I need from them and a lot of the senior management team there's quite a lot of interaction there' (INT: 545 – 551).

However, she was not at all comfortable about letting the work and social boundaries blur. As she said:

'my position is slightly more difficult because there is a lot of sensitivity around it, so a lot of the time I can't go and discuss things with other people and that's the difficulty in being in this kind of job role' (INT: 545 – 551), 'I've got a very different social persona with my friends than I do have here' (INT: 560), 'I will go to the Christmas party and I will go to lunch, but do I socialise personally with anyone in work? I tend not to and the reason for that is pretty much my job' (INT: 566 – 568), 'you go out for dinner when you're staying over and stuff like that, I always make an effort to go out for dinner and stuff like that, but in terms of socialising would I go to the pub would I go on a night out, no, that's not how I would do things and it is very much that, I don't ever want to put myself in a position that I would compromise myself with the company, because I'm very, very loyal like that, and I've never done that before in my work, however I've been out in a couple of social occasions where I've been uncomfortable and though I'm not going to put myself in that position again, and as you move higher up the levels you know I have got a lot of information I have got a lot of knowledge, simply that I can't share and can't discuss and just wouldn't' (INT: 576 – 584).

Her experience and relationships meant that she had insider knowledge.

Pete was quite tactical in his approach to building relationships. As he said:

'Well I've got a habit of doing that because I need to take advantage of the time that I am up in [the office], and I always find face to face communication a lot easier' (INT: 726 – 727), 'No I mean I don't schedule anything because everybody's got their own diaries, but I'll deliberately impose myself on people, because everybody's got 5 minutes for somebody', (INT: 760 – 761), 'There's little things that are constantly spinning around that will require a dialogue with somebody, it's like on the way over here I went down to see [John] who works for [a department] because I remember a discussion I had with [a colleague] because he's looking for some work to be done, so on the way up to see you I went to see [John] (INT: 796 – 799), 'So I got [John] over to see [my colleague] the two are having a dialogue together, so that was positive, that's the way it works' (805 – 806).

As the following shows, he valued face to face communication:

'If I fire an email up to Susan Lindner requesting that I need something by a certain date 9 times out of 10 she will tell me to fuck off, but if I get the opportunity to spend 5 minutes with you then sometimes....' (INT: 732 – 734), 'Face to face communication is the best way', (INT: 740).

As the following shows, networking and relationship building in the traditional sense was not something with which **Rick** was comfortable:

'.....don't have a huge network, there have been two recent instances where I've attended functions that have actually disproved my cynical view point on networking because I find them really useful so at the moment I have say through formal colleagues, maybe 5 or 6 people I could pick up the phone to and say whatever, I'm a bit of a convert to that now so I won't be looking to expand that' (INT: 649 – 653).

Malcolm has had to make tough decisions which impacted on relationships:

' there were things in my heart of hearts that I knew had to be done with people in the business when you're a director and you're not the main man, but when you're at the top and you make the decisions and some of the decisions involved me actually making redundant a couple of senior people, who were actually personal friends of mine, but you've got to divorce yourself from that to what am I doing here what is my position and what is the right thing for the business, and unfortunately for them that's the way I looked at it, you have to detach yourself from it, otherwise you must not let your heart rule your head, I lost the friendships immediately, which was sad, and when you look back its one of the things I regret, would I do it again, yes, because it was the right thing and the business actually moved on and became profitable' (INT: 144 – 153).

Kenneth had an honest approach to working relationships:

‘you’ve got to be honest with yourself and say people use each other, and people have got to understand that’s ok in life....’ (INT: 557 – 560), ‘....you’ve got to understand and its we do use each other, absolutely use each other maybe the words prostitute or whatever, I don’t know the proper word for it, but we do use and abuse each other, and the only way you can make money is to use people’, (INT: 570 – 573), ‘probably as you get older you realise what’s going on, using makes it sound quite harsh doesn’t it?’ (INT: 578 – 580).

Whilst other social actors indirectly discussed ‘using’ people, Kenneth’s explicit language, referring to prostitution, was the most powerful and revealing. Due to his experience within the organisation Kenneth was called upon by people looking for information. As commented:

‘I’ll get phone calls from people from 20 years ago, 15 years ago, I hear your working in [the organisation], I’m trying to do this can you help, absolutely, the guy you need to speak to is him and this is how we do it, or I think you’re wasting your time’ (INT: 566 – 568).

He believed there had been times in the past where he had put too much into his working relationships with these organisations, which had resulted in his personal relationships suffering. As he said:

‘...I gave 100% I mean really too much, relationships suffered badly and it was a really hard time and I don’t know how I managed it, because I had two young kids, I was at university, so it was really hard going.... my wife was counting invoices, I would take my kids in on a Saturday morning, they would be colouring in while I was doing work’ (INT: 581 – 588), ‘..... I was working 15 16 hours a day, really hard going working away from home very, very challenging, it was one the most difficult periods of my life, loved it, absolutely loved it, but I knew if I was going to stay there my marriage wouldn’t survive’ (INT: 734 – 739).

He, personally, experienced the consequences of playing a major part in a production.

As the following shows, **Patricia** liked her working environment:

'.....the people are a great laugh, and sometimes I can't believe this is so light hearted, I enjoy it here, it's not light hearted it's serious, but light hearted in some way, but it's so very different here [from previous organisation] (INT: 226 – 231). 'I came in with 14 of us I joined the day before induction day, it was like being a graduate trainee again but lot more older and wrinkly (laughs), so that was quite good from the point of view it was not an instant network, but we can all help each other, and I would say I still know all these guys that I started with and that's good and I was glad I came with that directors induction day' (INT: 263 – 269).

The new organisation provided instant support networks and shared realities. **Patricia** had been very career focused and found herself in the role of auntie rather than mother in her personal life. As she said:

'.....so I'm the auntie that they all come and stay with when they want to escape their parents' (INT: 750 – 751), '.....never had any desire for children where it's unfortunate when you meet people who have had a desire for children and..... I don't know how I've managed to escape that, but my mother says 'because you looked after so many of your brothers when you were younger!', but I have had no desire for them. And I enjoy my nephews and nieces but at the same time....' (INT: 768 – 762).

She believed that she has been fortunate in not wanting this type of relationship, although she was aware of others, who had by saying:

'one of my friends, she was in [another country] with me she said 'I want to get married and have children, I'm heading home', she said, 'I'm not going to marry [someone from another country], my Mum and Dad are in [Scotland], so I want to get home and I am going to apply for a job'. And she was home and married within two years to, I have to say, a terribly nice guy and you have to think 'that was lucky' (laughs) (INT: 776 – 783).

This suggested that her friend felt her professional role had inhibited her playing roles within her personal life. The following shows that she had a positive outlook:

'Oh yes I'm positive, I'm always on the up side the glass is always half full, although I will be realistic at times and say 'oh god, this is horrendous' and I will then worry when it has all happened and it is absolutely brilliant and I think was it really that bad?' (INT: 800-803).

Martin had reached a point in his life where his working life did not suit his personal life and the relationships within in it. As he said:

'To be fair that's why I left, it worked in fairly well with getting out of the hotel business getting into contracting, contracting tends to be more regular hours, and not so much emphasis on you working when other people are enjoying themselves, it actually worked out fairly well, there were other issues I continued to do a fair bit of travelling after I was married so your away from home at times of stress and trauma and what not but it can happen' (INT: 289 – 294).

He had to make a choice to support his personal, rather than professional role.

Act three: Knowledge and communication

Scene one: Different views of the same performance based on knowledge of overall script

Featuring: Ten director level social actors – Barbara, Patricia, Rick, Malcolm, Jack, Sarah, Kenneth, Pete, Martin and Graham – took part in the scene. Barbara, Patricia, Rick, Malcolm and Graham were centre stage; Jack and Kenneth were on the periphery; and Pete and Martin were backstage.

Barbara had insider knowledge of the business change and explained the cold, hard truth of the situation. She explained the process that the business had undertaken to identify the skills and experiences required of social actors and also the development of ‘key performers’. Most individuals were not privy to this knowledge. Although this was not shared widely, it did appear, however, that this was an entirely logical, planned change. As she said:

‘So the change was planned, and one of the things I said to [the managing director] even before we got to any change by going through this process you will have people who do not want to be in the business if this is the way you’re going to start making decisions that happened very quickly’ (INT: 372-385).

Part of the process was done through a development centre and speaking with a psychologist discussing behaviours. As she added:

‘.....as a result of that a couple of months later some people left, and it’s not a direct impact on that, but it certainly had something to do with it’ (INT: 372 – 385), ‘ [the managing director] was made aware that some people might leave and that was fine....’ (INT: 393-401).

This process, then, meant that more people had to be recruited to bring the required skills and experience into the production. As she explained:

'These people were all recruited against the behaviours and requirements that what we were looking for' (INT: 433 – 448), '.....in general we've only lost 1 person that joined us and that was our choice, and everyone else seems to be relatively stable in their roles, they seem to be enjoying it, one or two people have been promoted very quickly or given bigger responsibilities, they all tend to fit into the teams so you know I think it's been relatively successful so far' (INT: 482 – 486).

Once explained, this process seemed logical and almost necessary. However, due to their lack of knowledge of the overall situation, individuals were left wondering and guessing as to what was really going on. She explained:

'.....that was two and half years ago that we started this ball rolling' (INT: 118 – 119). '.....but there was lots of background that we had to do before we implemented it, and we implemented it about 18 months ago and as a result of that this has enabled all this change to happen' (INT: 119 – 121), 'some of us, and it's not all of the [directors] either, but some of us within [directors] have this what I would call privilege in knowing all this information, so to me when things like that happen I don't get nervous about it, but all other people are seeing is this black wall this black hole where people are falling in to (discussing the turnover of director level employees) and my concern is about making sure that the communication of that is right and it's not something we're good at..... employee communication around that could have been slightly better managed, but again some of the ways that you agree removals or exists is confidential and you're not allowed to talk about it, so it's quite a difficult position for [the managing director] to be in actually because he will probably be seen as some kind of hatchet man and it's not the case it's not like that at all' (INT: 413 – 424).

She highlighted that the formal communication process was not as good as it could have been. However, interestingly, rather than rectifying this situation, she hoped that people would be able to put all the pieces of the puzzle together. As she said:

'I genuinely hope that some people, because of this [recent business change], I hope some people put two and two together and see why he's [the Managing Director],been making the changes he's been making recently, because it's the right thing for the future of the business.....' (INT: 701 – 705).

Patricia actively tried to overcome lack of honesty amongst her colleagues. As she said:

'No, no a lot of people are closed and then you think well we're a team here, but we might have an environment where you don't want to admit it, if you don't understand this therefore we need to talk about this and it's important that you do to get shared learning otherwise we could be repeating mistakes' (INT: 283-285).

When people were secretive or deliberately withholding information, she called upon them anyway by adding:

'I mean I'm quite lucky being in the [directors team], I'll phone anyone anyway, I don't know everybody and I don't understand every bit of the business that's for sure, but I'll ask, and certainly I will find an enormous amount out now I know what we've to get done' (INT: 504 – 508).

Her title and formal role gave her power to access most knowledge within the production.

Malcolm very much believed in honesty and, sometimes, he thought he was too honest. As he said:

'I very much work on the basis of being open and honest, maybe to honest, to open but that's the way I've worked all my life' (INT: 127 – 138)..... 'I am open and honest and I'm challenging, I'm sometimes not politically correct, I'm sometimes a little bit abrupt, I wear my heart on my sleeve, but whatever the positives are must outweigh the negatives otherwise I would be here today talking to you.' (INT: 276, 278).

Rick was privy to insider knowledge and offered his view of the director turnover by saying:

' I think there's been a few things, I think there's been a natural turnover, I think there's been a natural attrition within the senior management group of late, and again its easy if you're in the thick of it you go 'oh my god another senior guy and he's been here for 'x' length of time', but I think if you were to stand back from it dispassionately you would look at it and go that's probably again a pretty inevitable product of change' (INT: 251 – 258). '.... it's difficult on a personal basis there's one or two guys who I think are a real loss to the organisation' (INT: 289 – 290), 'I think there is a bloodletting, there is a requirement for fresh approach and fresh ideas and we've gotten to that point now and people leaving at times provides you with opportunities to do things differently, so specifically no I wouldn't say that it poses too many problems' (INT: 296 – 299).

In his role as a manager, **Rick** believed honesty was essential as he symbolised employees' perception of the organisation. As he said:

'.....my relationship with the company is based 95% on you my relationship with you as a manager, and if it's not right there, then my opinion or if I'm down the pub talking about [the organisation] its probably more for the most part grounded on what I think of my relationship with you as the manager, I can't help it but that's just the way people are and if its good it's very good but if I think your dishonest and holding stuff back but that you have my interest at hear or treat me badly then the whole company get branded by that stick' (INT: 550 – 564)

By not communicating, **Rick** believed it had a negative outcome. As he said:

' they (employees) have lack of information that creates a vacuum, and people, never in my experience where there's been a lack of information have people come up with a positive spin, it's always we're doomed, you're out the door and I'm getting sacked and it's all over so we may as well look for other jobs....' (INT: 572 – 575), '..... longer term success is dependent on having a more collaborative approach to things and that's basically down to relationships and communications' (INT: 653 – 676).

As **Jack** was brought into the business as a result of the changes, he had a more positive outlook on them. Having experienced similar changes before, he described what happened when individuals found themselves in productions within which they could not carry out their roles. As he explained:

' ..if you look at the departures and the changes, a lot of the people who have gone either of their own violation or not are because they're long servers they've done a great job in the business, but then they couldn't take the next step they weren't given the tools or the skills or they just aren't prepared to make it....' (INT: 213 – 222).

The following shows his excitement about the future performance:

' I think the business is at a really interesting point, this business grew rapidly in five years through the previous structure, we spent last year struggling with a new structure with changes in personnel at the top and managed to continue our success, this year we've continued to do that a bit we've started to turn our attention back out towards the customers in the market which is if the right thing to do, we need to continue that growth, we need to continue to win bigger and longer deals..... I think we've got a fantastic business, a great bunch of people who just need to achieve that almost X factor, we need.... We're in the crux of doing that, we just need to be able to do that, we've brought these good people in we've got fantastic customers..... it's all there to be done, and we've done you know all those things enable us to have the people in place to do some great things and move forward, I think the future is potentially very bright, I think the danger is and I know this as a business we can be very arrogant and over confident, and that's very

dangerous because any customer doesn't like that but particularly in our market' (INT: 916 – 935).

Sarah had not been affected negatively by the restructuring of the business. She explained:

'...when they did the business restructure, it didn't affect me at all..... and to be honest, businesses go through cycles, when I was at [previous organisation] there was a summer where we lost 6 or 7 [members of the organisation], and then I just levels out, and then it peaks', and businesses are just cyclical I mean you just get on with it, probably most the directors that left, went to other jobs it was the right time for them to leave, they weren't happy, you know not many of them were pushed out and had no idea and didn't expect it, so you just accept it and get on with it, and actually there was no one that went that I thought either didn't want to go, didn't have somewhere better to go or just wasn't cutting it' (INT: 326 – 335). *'..... it wasn't bullying tactics, it wasn't get people out because there face doesn't fit, it was performance or choice'* (INT: 341 – 342). *'..... it didn't impact me, maybe impacted other people, I'm not sure, but to be honest its business, and if you can't hack it you just get on with it, and all business are the same they're all run the same way, and I think because I saw it at [previous organisation, you get used to it.'* (INT: 352 – 355).

Sarah's view of 'it's just business' was an interesting one.

Certain roles within the organisation required specialised knowledge, and both **Jack's** and **Sarah's** roles were examples of this. There was only one other role within the organisation, which had the same official job title as **Sarah's**. She believed that:

'.....people are very respectful of what I say and probably I think because most people don't understand [the subject] or are scared because if I say something 'well that could cost you....' you know they're going to listen, so it's something I think out with a lot of people's comfort zone, and it shouldn't be, because a lot 99% of it is common sense, but I think if you say that to somebody, they think' oh the [subject matter specialist] said this so we better listen', so people do give you respect' (INT: 263 – 269).

She viewed her knowledge as power.

Kenneth had a different perspective of the recent changes because of where he stood on the stage. As he explained:

'....it upset a huge number of staff.... brought these people in from nowhere they all appeared in the business, and the failure rate among them has probably been pretty high, and a lot of them aren't as good as the people we've got, did they need to do it, I think they had to do it, I think they had to send a message across the business that people had to step up to the mark and change their game but a lot of the has been our problem because there are individuals in the business who are great but have been badly managed, they've been made promises or they've been managed incorrectly, some super guys who have been over managed, some guys who have been left to their own devices, there are some guys who believe they are at a level that they're not, and nobody has ever told them, I was told where I fit in the organisation, I was told my skill setting, I understood my weaknesses, these guys..... nobody's actually sat down and said look your making a mistake in this area, you're not doing this properly, there's work you need to do on that, you need to focus on that, and what happens is they then fall to by the way side, they then become disillusioned' (INT: 852 – 867).

Kenneth acknowledged that there was a new game to be played and there was a need to be aware of strengths and weaknesses to enable social actors to play their roles or, alternatively, they would suffer the consequences. The following shows that he still agreed that changes had to occur:

'I know we've got some talented individuals who could do a really good job for us, some of them can't be saved, they just will not fit into the new business shape' (INT: 875 – 876), 'and when all of this shit is coming out 'everybody is leaving, blah blah blah', everybody is not leaving, a couple of guys have left in fairness, over the UK there have maybe been 15 or 20 people who have left, some people left because they knew that they were going to get moved sideways, they knew that they weren't executive director material or they knew that they weren't going to get promoted and they knew that they were in that dead end job' (INT: 1015 – 1023).

Kenneth believed that some individuals were dishonest in their formal interactions by saying:

‘we’ve got 50 people in a room and we’ve said that this is what we are trying to do and they all sit and nod and say ‘that’s great, that’s super’, and you’ll walk out and have a coffee and people will be saying, ‘that’s shite, another piece of nonsense’ (INT: 1117 – 1124).

Within his team, **Pete** faced similar issues. As he said:

‘It’s like within my own team at the moment and whether this is my fault or whether it just the nature of the beast but the 5 other directors, who sit round the table with me, we sit down once a month and we sit and listen half heartedly about what we’re each doing [our own reports], I’m not going to take anything away from it’ (INT: 907 – 908). ‘I don’t know what other teams are like, [the team] at the moment is not a tight team and everybody is slightly suspicious of one other’ (INT: 1040 – 1041).

Both **Pete** and **Kenneth** highlighted that the lack of honesty, and different faces being used for different performances.

Operating in an environment, where some individuals were honest and others were not, could cause tensions. **Jack** found some reluctant to share information when requested to do so. As he said:

‘ some people will involve you and include you and make stuff available and give you what you ask, others people will huff and puff and you have to just say well we need that, but as a business world we’re definitely not as open as we should be’, (INT: 825 – 828).

Martin thought the changes were necessary although would inevitably lead to internal politics. As he said:

'....you need people to set the tone for the business, and if people are just constantly coming in from outside so all they are bringing is the tone from where ever they've come from, so the tone of the business will change as people at that level change..... I certainly don't encourage any change at the top but I think there has to be a pretty consistent vision because if not all levels will get confused..... they shape the culture of the organisation I don't care what anyone says the culture of the organisation is shaped from the top not from the bottom' (INT: 362 – 370), whilst he thought there would be politics, he believed that his fellow actors were honest, 'I find the people are really great and that's being dead straight, they're really committed, really straightforward, there's no doubt a bit of politics and bitchiness, but that's not a major thing' (INT: 66 – 73).

Sitting next to natural knowledge brokers enabled **Martin**, on joining the organisation, to gain valuable informal, tacit knowledge. He explained:

'I actually sit beside two PA's (personal assistant) my own PA and [another PA], and so I sit there, so they know everything.' (INT: 144 – 145).

As the following shows, this was not always the case:

'I would be happy to sit anywhere.... initially I sat beside these guys..... there was one guy who was very friendly, pretty accommodating, the rest were, they weren't openly hostile and they just blanked you, wouldn't volunteer anything' (INT: 141 – 144).

There was no trust, no established relationship, making existing employees less likely to share what they knew. Getting to know people was particularly difficult for **Martin** and, as he said:

'..... that's maybe a generational thing, one of the first things I asked for your used to picking up a book and looking through it, or picking up a phone, to me has been a bit of a challenge, because you are here [at headquarters] you bump into people and you meet people, but I mean even the other day somebody asked me to help out with a some interviewees for a new set of senior managers that they're bring in, and 90% of the people I met down there [in London] I had never seen in my life before' (INT: 108 – 115), '.....another thing I found strange here is that so much is done here by email rather than by picking up the phone or going and visiting with people' (INT: 417 – 419), '(on email) - it has a lot of people use it as an insurance covering type exercise' (INT: 438).

Upon joining the organisation, if **Patricia** felt that people were deliberately being unhelpful, she would broach the subject. As she explained:

'I didn't think about it, but there were occasion where I've thought, 'hmmm we need to get a few things clear here', and we've duly got the things clear and we've carried on' (INT: 263 – 269), 'I will try and get to know them get to work with them I'm quite a tolerant person, my natural way is to be tolerant, but if somebody is not playing the game, I can't stand that then I will deal with them' (INT: 293 – 295).

Her language was quite aggressive and masculine; the female social actors tended to express themselves in the same way.

Pete conveyed that he was not worried about the latest changes. However, I questioned his sincerity, when he said:

'Do I have anything to worry about, no, I don't think so, if I'm not doing what I'm supposed to do or I don't fit in the line manager then fine, it's up to me to do something about it, I don't know I either go along with what they want from me or I do something different' (INT: 657 – 659), but,

'when you've got senior management that are continually getting chased out it's not good for the business' (INT: 1142 – 1144).

Nevertheless, **Pete** saw the changes as positive by saying:

'I think what they're going through at the moment certainly in the past 9, 10 months is fantastic, they're weeding out a lot of as I said to you before I thought there was people in position in this company that didn't merit it.' (INT: 610 – 612). 'If you're any good at your job and you're confident at your job then you shouldn't have anything to worry about.' (INT: 650 – 651). On bringing new people into the organisation, 'That gives a fresh approach, some of them are complete arseholes that I've met, and in terms of what additional value they're bringing to the company I don't know, but somebody seen something in as individuals, but certainly there's a majority of people they are bringing in now that are going to freshen up how we go about thing.' (INT: 629 – 632).

His lack of knowledge of the whole production was evident as he focussed on the social actors' personalities. Having been with the organisation for several years, He was considered to be an experienced individual. As the following shows, he had lots of tacit knowledge:

'I was in the what they called the 'team meeting' and I'm about the only man, in fact I'm the only director now within the team that has been here well the length of time that I have, 90% of the guys who sit round the table are all new to the business as of January 07, and I sit back with slight amusement listening to the moans and groans' (INT: 706 – 710),it's down to communication it's down to relationships within this company, if you're not getting a certain kind of financial report 'go and speak to such and such', yes, and it's very much 'who you know' at the moment to get things done' (INT: 714 – 718).

Malcolm and **Pete** both expressed the dangers of being too honest within the organisation. As **Pete** added:

' the reason I didn't progressed two or three years ago was because of that, I was too open, there was certain kind of board room ethics that I

never quite grasped, yes, and people were making observations about me, and one of the tags labelled at me I remember two or three years ago I always came across as Mr half, what's the expression?... Mr half full (INT: 465 – 468).

He indicated that he would leave the organisation if he thought that there were no more opportunities for him by saying:

'Then it's time to move on, you know you should be tuned into that' (INT: 160).....' you don't want to stay where you're not wanted, some people can quite happily go through life with their head down you know totally de-motivated but it's just a job. Other people can accept the position they're in and do something about it' (INT: 170 -172).

Such views indicated that the social actors needed to be aware of their expiry dates.

Graham believed that poor communication was at the root of most work related issues by saying:

'it's always been anytime where I've been in situations where in a work capacity things haven't went well it's because of poor communication not down to people not having the right skills although sometimes that is the case' (INT: 72 – 75).

He believed that it was equally important to focus on what was not said is by saying:

' you have to explore things a bit further because people will come and speak about something else, and you look at their body language and you might even look at them as ay your under that P today, and they might start to tell you what's going on, and I suppose from that point of view we're looking at again I'm kind of putting my troubleshooting hat on at that point of view, it's when you they always say a troubles shared is a troubled halved, and it sometimes can be that, that just listen to or get them to talk through a situation, sometimes they actually resolve it themselves by the time you get to the end of the conversation' (INT: 898 – 905).

Graham actively tried to overcome the barriers put up by some counterparts by getting to know them outside the workplace. As he said:

' It's more difficult to get close to them at times, because a lot of them are not quite as open but we tend to sometimes travel on the same flights and go to the same things' (INT: 873 – 875).

Similarly, when he was interviewing someone for a role, he used this as an opportunity to 'get a feeling' about the person. As he explained:

' it comes to light when I'm interviewing, but that's the key one if someone's coming in for a job, I've got an hour with that person, I've probably read their CV I've got an idea that they're technical competent, if people come in for an interview I would want to see those that other 60% or 40% skills they were speaking about earlier right you display them to me, right you can come across would you motivate me to do anything, and as you say you get difficult people, and if I feel that's the case if I struggle and I try pretty hard to tease out whatever I need to know then I put that person in work situation as well and would I think they would fit in and the answer might be no, but difficult people sometimes you might have to go round and come back again, but you have to be patient' (INT: 254 – 262).

Many people experienced a great deal of uncertainty due to the changes and the lack of communication about them. Although some could see the need for changes at senior level, which would result in 'fresh blood', 'new ideas', 'real enthusiasm', and 'new ways to drive the business', the frequency of the changes led to an issue over implementation. In this regard, **Judy** offered the following perspective:

' (on new directors coming into the business)....but every time they do that, bring somebody new in they then take their time to change the way they want them, and then somebody else comes in then they want to change that, so you never actually get implementation (PIL: 411 – 422), 'I preferred the business a couple of years ago, I feel it's not, I love this business but I feel it's not necessarily pause..... It seems to

be getting a bit mixed up and there's a lot of changes going on at very senior levels, which causes uncertainty in the business, and that has a knock on effect and' (PIL: 144 – 147).....*I don't know, I don't know, I think its maybe becoming too big too quick and things get missed out and not really you know embedding things properly, leaving things alone, business changes quite a lot and I think it sometimes, people just sit there and wait for another change to happen, you know* (PIL: 218 – 221).....*I love this company, I know it can do good things, I just wish it would settle itself down and sort itself out and have a little bit of time to maybe just get on and really deliver good things and just sometimes feel it's all a bit manic* (PIL: 627 – 630).

As an employee within the organisation, I, frequently, experienced the impact of changes, illustrated in the lack of consistency in the management of my team over a three year period. As I said:

'When I joined the business, I thought that it was turbulent and competitive and changed quite quickly. Since then, my team has grown dramatically, I have had four line managers, three of whom have left the organisation and one is soon to leave, I am now on my fourth.....' (REF: 6106 – 6116).

As the following shows, **Kenneth** did not think he had a place in the organisation:

'.....maybe because some people think that my level in the organisation is pretty high and they give me respect at that level and they give me latitude that in the cold light of day I'm probably due it in other respects' (INT:511 – 513). Although he is not ready to leave the organisation, *'I don't want to give up'* (INT: 489), although he feels that it is time to move on from the organisation, *'I am not going to progress in this organisation.... The only way for me is down the way or I might be lucky that I get to stay where I am'* (INT: 1038 – 1039).

Also, in this respect, he used the following 'fighting talk', *'once they [the new directors] realise I'm so stubborn I'll stick in there and see them off.'* (INT: 1040-1041).

Chapter Five: Discussion

As a qualitative study, this chapter provides an interesting overview of what I have found useful and exciting along with my interpretation of what I think it all means. I present my personal opinions and professional judgement, and provide an insight to the origins of my thinking; uncovering what I have learned and setting out new questions, which have arisen.

Uncovering the fragments of culture

Ethnography was key to developing an understanding, observing and interpreting the social world, of which I was a part. I was interested in how social actors deciphered the workplace so that they could behave appropriately. I explored and constructed the meanings of events in order to determine multiple perspectives and influences, which shaped the social world. I attempted to reveal individuals' understandings of the social world and their situations in the workplace taking into account the tacit and explicit knowledge experienced in everyday social interactions. The two main challenges of this research were:

1. Finding new insights to enable me to focus on the fragments of the culture
2. Interpreting and expressing in writing what I had been experienced

Boje (2001) defined double visioning a skill that I had to master, moving away from focusing only on the visible, explicit, observable elements of the organisation, whilst, at the same time, looking at the tacit, cognitive element of the culture. It became common place for me to interpret individuals' everyday communications and deconstruct the various interactions that I observed. This involved becoming skilled at 'reading' situations, a process, which I learnt through experience, almost subconsciously, I read and re-read everyday situations. As an employee and to enable me to participate fully within the social reality, I had a vested interest in

discovering how people behaved and revealing why they behaved in these ways. I was not alone in attempting to decipher the assumptions, which guided individuals' behaviours and focused on uncovering who did what and for what reason. In order to survive and participate within organisations, individuals, almost subconsciously, participated in the same processes, and some appeared to exploit the processes, which, as an ethnographer, I had gone through to become competent in such matters. Aside from the questionnaire, the methods, which I adopted, were no different to the techniques, which individuals used as part of their working day; they communicated, interpreted and re-interpreted their understandings, observed and interacted with one another. During the journey of cultural discovery and interacting within the social world, there were times when my impact proved negative due to a variety of reasons. These were largely my lack of understanding of what was going on, frequency of change, and the amount of time required to participate fully in culture. Perhaps, as Herzberg et al (1993) said, my experiences were not unique since, for most of us, work was a substantial part of our lives; for some it was a source of satisfaction whilst for others it was a source of grief. Therefore, I believe that there was a definite personal cost associated with being part of the social reality. My observations of other social actors' experiences and my direct communications with them highlighted that I was not alone in finding that there was an impact from participating in the cultural scenario. Therefore, the following three points were of interest:

1. How individuals were able to survive within the organisation.
2. Why were some able to not only survive, but thrive whilst others were unable to.
3. What were the personal consequences of interacting within the social realities in the work place.

Subsequently in this chapter, I aim to discuss, the key points outlined over the page, considering them together with the identified inter-related themes, which were interpretations of both the formal and informal fragments of culture. I perceived these as the collective multiple realities of all that were involved in this research as reflected in Figure twenty below:

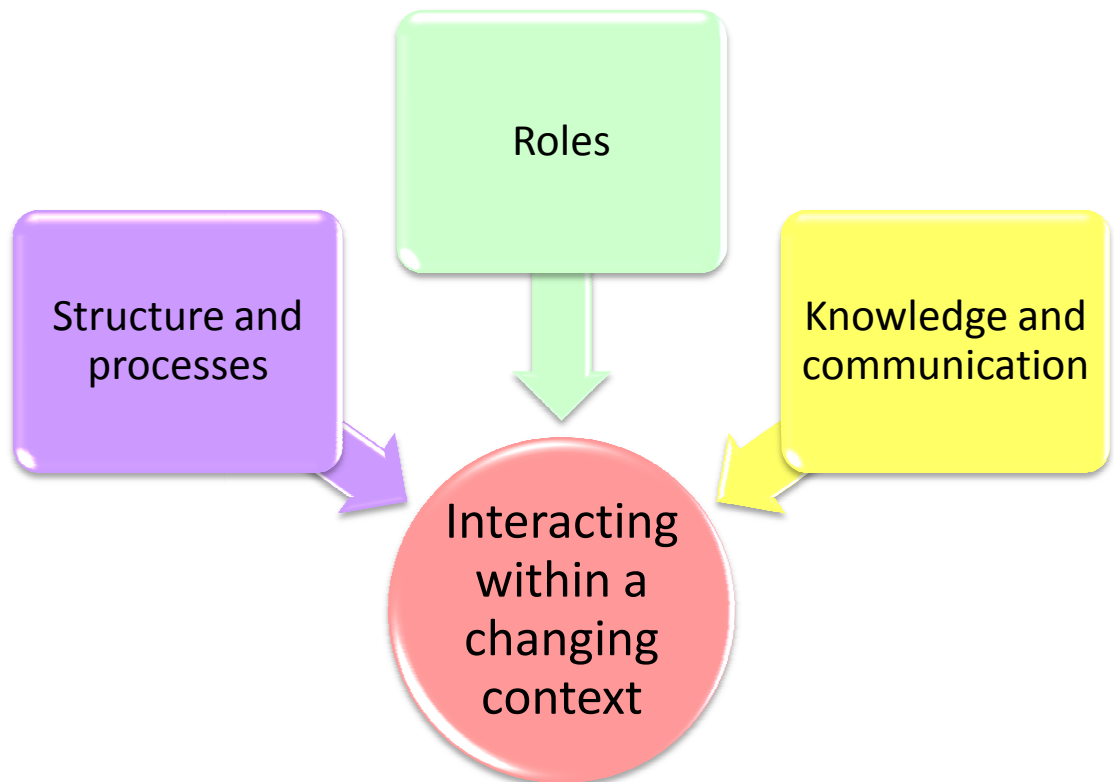


Figure twenty: Cultural clues revealed by interacting in the social reality

Interpreting the fragments of culture

Figure twenty one below depicts some of the cultural clues that helped reveal the cultural scenario, which were revealed throughout the course of this research:

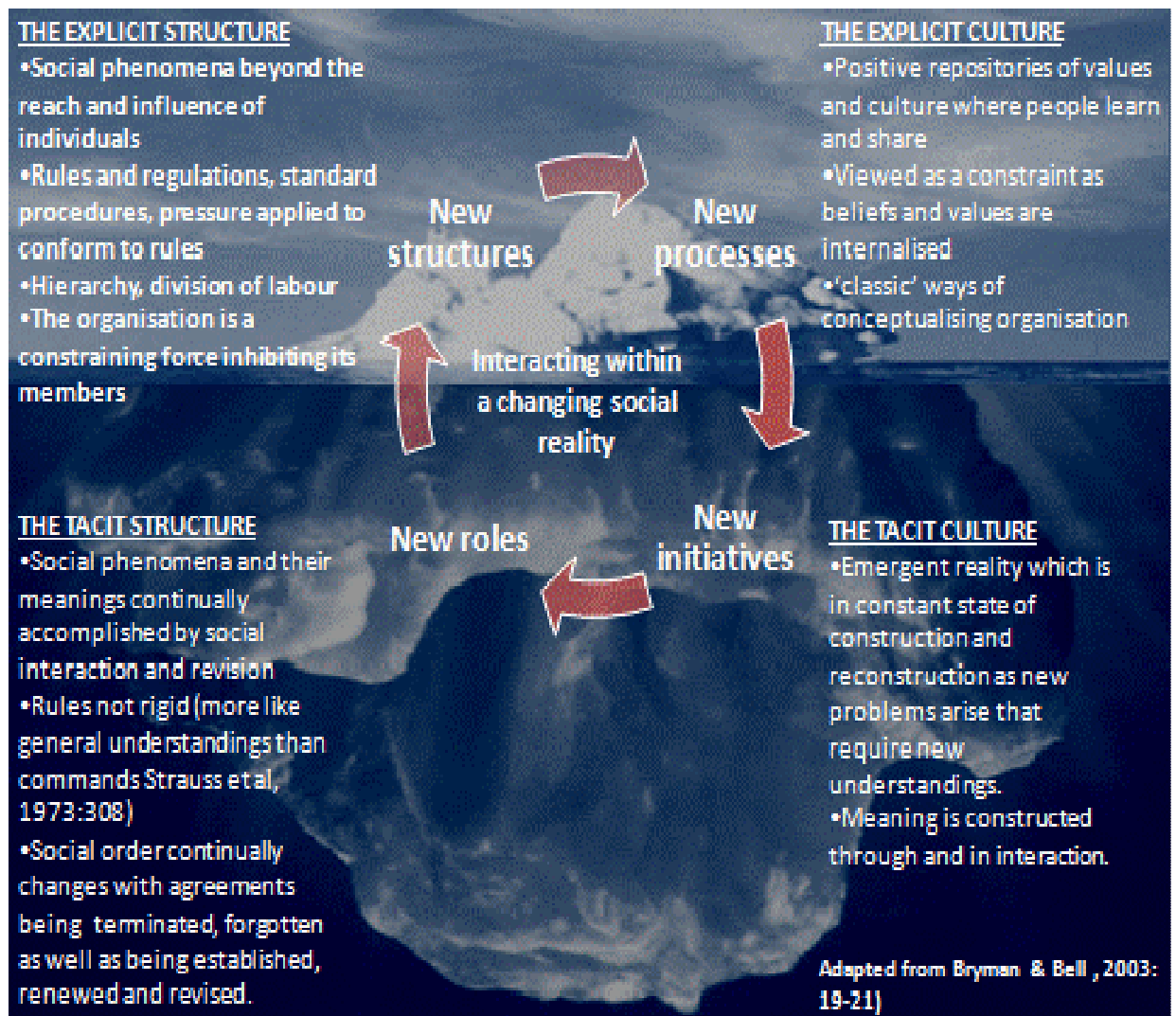


Figure twenty one: Clues revealed

As demonstrated above, individuals were interacting in a workplace of frequent change in initiatives, processes, roles and structures. After two years of service, I witnessed a shift in how I was perceived. As many individuals moved on from the organisation, I had gone from being someone with little knowledge, networks and

experience, to an individual that could be called upon if someone were seeking knowledge. Valuable knowledge of the cultural scenario was largely stored within the heads of individuals and within networks, when these changed, the knowledge was often lost, or less people had it, making those that had it more valuable by others.

Providing an overview of the production

Whilst Burke's (1969) ontological view was that social and organisational life was theatre; that was not the view of this research. The dramatisic model of human behaviour is a useful tool in focussing on what had been presented and offering an explanation of what it all meant. In order to provide a synopsis of the production, I used the pentad (shown in figures twenty two, twenty three and twenty four) to provide a brief review and reflection of my interpretations. It provided an overview of what was involved when I described what people were doing and why they were doing it – the motives underlying action. I conceptualised the pentad in five elements in a very light touch way, which represented human drama within the organisation. The *act* outlined what happened; the *scene* outlined where the act occurred; the *agent* was the person/people performing the act; the *agency* outlined how the actors acted and the *purpose* outlined why the actors acted. Also, it offered an analysis of the social reality, outlined why some aspects had been perceived more important than others, and offered you, the reader, my interpretation of the reality. There was a clear overlap between these themes, which should be treated as interrelated themes rather than standalone scenes – they are connected. The entire production was typified by change; actors were impacted by this at different levels depending on their knowledge of the whole production and their part within it. Each of the acts and scenes chosen for this production provided an overview of the social processes within the organisation and the impact on those, who were actors within it.

Structure and processes - The production and stage

Structure and processes		Agent	Act	Scene	Agency	Purpose
	The production - having a part in the production	Pete and Martin were backstage, Jack was on the periphery and Patricia, Graham and Rick were centre stage.	Lack of structure and process (yet there seems to be a reliance on informal structure and process).	All face-to-face sessions and observations were carried out prior to the final organisational transformation, the last act of change, all took place in the Scottish head office.	Symbols: Structure charts, job descriptions, processes – in spite of these, people still operate and function.	Formally requiring structure and processes, yet informally surviving and thriving without. Consideration of why - To catch people who were good at playing the game but not actually good at performing their role?
	The stage - seeing what's taking place	Pete was backstage, Jack and Kenneth were on the periphery and Patricia, Graham and Sarah were centre stage.	Open plan, status, visibility, too many meetings.		Symbols: Access to people, perception of being part of team.	Formal meetings, informal chat, perceptions.

Figure twenty two: Structure and processes dramatism model

Social actors at all levels within this organisation were faced with complexity and change on a daily basis and had a different perspective on these changes depending upon where they were physically and structurally positioned within it. In the past, the competitive functions within the organisation were innovative; this was a key part of the culture but was no longer a sustainable strategy. Whilst the organisation had been re-invented and re-positioned several times; it was highly successful. It was, perhaps, a victim of its own success since it was unable to embed the appropriate formal processes and procedures in order to support the changes, which were taking place. Previously, there had been many different performances, acted out in isolation across the organisation, each with their main characters. This structure meant that there were many small performances being enacted with what seemed like little regard to the overall production. This caused rivalry amongst actors and shows with each competing for audiences and, therefore, resources. New formal structures were created to enable the overall organisation to perform more coherently. In theory, the structural changes meant that all social actors would work together for the greater good of the overall production. However, some social actors believed that the new structure created only new small productions rather than a desired large production, still with competing elements rather than focusing on the larger production and channelling energy into its success. As Morgan (2006) described, it was not apparent that the social actors were supported with a new shared vision and values, which would enable them to deal with the new emerging realities. This meant that the social actors might have been competing with their own ideologies and structures of meaning.

It was comparatively straightforward to uncover structures, hierarchies, rules, and most other concrete and rational aspects of organisational life. A very formal hierarchical structure, evidenced by the organisational charts, which changed frequently, showed that all social actors had a place within the performance, and had clear lines of responsibility and reporting procedures. This formal structure meant that the social actors had clearly defined roles and ways of working. They knew what days of the week they were on stage and between what hours; they had guidelines and processes for most things that they were expected to do. There were obvious policies, which sought to protect and support social actors and, in addition, to discipline them if they deviated from the rules, which governed the

production. The social constructions and meanings, which were crucial to understanding how social actors functioned on a daily basis, were more subtle and difficult to uncover. However, with the changing reality within this phenomenon, social actors had to interpret their new roles continually and had to improvise, as and when required. Not all social actors had the authority to improvise or the knowledge to enable them to know how to improvise. Some appeared more than capable of doing so. However, due changes amongst the senior actors, focus moved frequently and there were many new initiatives and a perceived lack of implementation. It was observed that new initiatives were implemented when new senior level actors took on new roles and interpreted their roles with a fresh perspective. During my almost three years in the organisation, I had five line managers and three different directors led my team. All had their own ideas on shaping the production, which, in itself, brought a lot of change and uncertainty. Despite the formal processes and procedures, aimed at providing support and structure, it was evident that the social actors created their own processes and structures for interacting within the organisation. In part, these enabled them to fulfil their formal roles, to find out what was going on within the organisation, and, perhaps, to identify opportunities to exploit. Therefore, whilst on paper there was a lot of structure and process, it could be seen that, in practice, there was a constantly shifting focus and lack of accountability, which made it challenging for social actors to uncover what was going on or to know what was coming next.

All of this production took place within an open plan office, which, in theory, would facilitate communication and sharing of knowledge. The main stage was within the 'departure lounge', an open plan area where the directors were located; this term, in itself, highlighted the frequent changes. In practice, it was questionable whether the open plan layout made it easier to share information. It enabled the social actors to be visible and there might have been, even, a symbolic status associated with being seated in this area near the overall production director (the managing director) and the senior team. However, it was unclear if this had an impact on how people communicated.

Roles - Being a director; awareness of strengths and weaknesses; flexibility, availability and visibility; webs of people

Roles		Agent	Act	Scene	Agency	Purpose
	Being a director – Do you know who I am?	Pete was backstage, Jack and Kenneth on the periphery, Graham and Rick were centre stage.	Title, influence, power, interested in work, length of service.	All face-to-face sessions and observations were carried out prior to the final organisational transformation, the last act of change, all took place in the Scottish head office.	Symbols: title language, dress code, tools, organisational charts, job descriptions, organisational vision statement.	Discussing pace of change; short term contracts seem like a long time.
	Strengths and weaknesses - I know who I am or who I can be	Pete and Martin were backstage, Kenneth and Jack were on the periphery, Graham, Patricia and Sarah were centre stage.	Awareness of strengths and weaknesses.		Symbols: 360 feedback, psychological profiling. No visible clues, actors could employ defensive face saving routines.	Reflective social actors – for personal survival and progression.
	Flexibility, availability and visibility – can you see me?	Judy was not on the stage, Kenneth was on the periphery and Sarah, Patricia and Rick were centre stage	Quick progression, ability to recognise and exploit opportunities, being 'in tune'. Blurring of personal and professional roles.		Symbols – visibility and language.	Being flexible, available and adaptable as well as ability – costs versus benefit of these acts.

	<p>Webs of people - being connected</p>	<p>Martin and Pete were backstage, Jack and Kenneth were on the periphery, Malcolm, Patricia, Sarah, Rick, Barbara and Graham were centre stage.</p>	<p>Expiration date of being flexible, available and visible.</p> <p>Actively managing relationships, personal relationships (within and out with organisation) suffering as a result of roles, people using each other.</p>	<p>Symbols: Language, Organisational charts, job descriptions, organisational vision statement – all have a formal role to play. Informal networks harder to define.</p>	<p>Regardless of formal roles, the existence of informal relationships, managing relationships, people using each other, preference for face to face interactions.</p>
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Figure twenty three: Roles in dramatism model

As shown in Figure twenty three over the page, although this production focused predominantly on eleven director level social actors, there were approximately seventy social actors within the organisation, who all had varying levels of responsibility when this research began. All social actors had job descriptions, which outlined their roles and responsibilities. However, being human, the social actors brought with them their personalities and past experiences, interpreting their expected roles and reinterpreting them afresh when they gained new experiences within the social reality. The shifting focus meant that it was difficult for the social actors to perfect their performances. They had to learn new versions and adapt their role to suit; they could have struggled to find out about the purpose of their performance unless, of course, they were at the forefront of implementing the change in direction. I was able to observe many patterns when considering the social actors as a whole. I observed the role of informal learning and communication with a reliance on networks. These patterns, which were evident in my observations of all the directors' daily routines, were what sparked my interest in this group at the beginning of this research. Learning seemed almost subconscious, a process of reflection and action, occurring continually as a way of interpreting the 'everydayness' of human experience. Their formal roles meant that they were privy to different levels of knowledge over the overall production. All social actors, to different degrees, had to interpret how the production would unfold, especially difficult given the frequent of changes. Whilst they were all directors, their formal job descriptions outlined their respective responsibilities. However, the majority of their interactions and how they went about carrying out their roles were unscripted. It was evident that they interacted with individuals to uncover clues about the goings on within the production. Their roles and responsibilities provided power and flexibility for some social actors to be 'entertained' and 'interested', which meant that they had a lot of leeway to improvise. They appeared to have authority to do so for a variety of reasons, perhaps, because they had earned the right by delivering and had proved their worth, and/or they had a good understanding of the social reality and how to behave within it. The number of changes meant that what, normally, would be considered a short period of service equated to long service as people moved on and the people, who were there, had to learn quickly to survive and to identify opportunities to exploit.

The majority of the social actors, whom I have described, were aware of their strengths and weaknesses. This could have been quite simply because they did not wish to fail in their formal roles. Also, it could have been attributed to the fact that they wanted to progress and, in order to do so, they had to understand their behaviour and adapt or modify their behaviour to stay relevant within the changing landscape. Their awareness of strengths and weaknesses indicated to me that the directors were reflective social actors. It did not seem that this reflection occurred to improve the overall performance, but their role within it. It seemed central in enabling them to survive. In the latter stages of this research, all directors undertook a 360 degree feedback exercise and an element of psychological profiling to encourage them to consider their behaviours within their performance. Naturally, all of these individuals considered their own strengths and weaknesses since they had to be 'in tune' with what tools they had and what was required of them not only to play their formal role but, also, to play another role within the production, or what others would perceive of their behaviours and ability to play another role. All directors were employed because of their strengths and they considered that they had the ability to carry out their roles. However, as nothing stayed the same for very long, it was questionable whether their roles stayed the same or changed frequently. Some individuals might have coped well with the changes and thrived and progressed whilst some might have struggled to adapt and finally, some might have been unaffected by the changes. The existing formal processes and procedures (for example, performance reviews) would have provided an account of this. However, it was questionable how some coped within this myriad of changes. In the course of this research, many directors left the organisation. It was impossible to put a number on this because many of these 'departures' were never communicated to the wider workplace. When the social actors did not have the ability to perform or did not have the knowledge, there were formal processes in place to protect and support them. However, when social actors used face saving processes, it was difficult to identify whether or not they were coping, which could have left them struggling, feeling overwhelmed and disillusioned.

Perhaps, while it seemed important to have an understanding of individual skills and weaknesses, not all individuals appeared to have the necessary ability or the skills to be able to adapt given the frequent changes within the organisation and might

have been no longer 'useful'. Some social actors indicated this and highlighted that their main choice would have been to leave the organisation when they were no longer 'useful' or take on another role with less responsibility; although this was not a realistic option for many. It needs to be considered whether large productions abused social actors by working them until they were no longer useful and if this was ethically and morally correct – or if it was simply 'just business'. That notion was mentioned several times in conversations. In order to stay useful and be noticed, it appeared that the social actors took on more responsibility than was assigned to their formal roles. This was not part of their script and was improvised. In turn, this would offer them the opportunity to identify and tackle more activities as they built up their knowledge, experiences, networks of contacts, and develop relationships, which enabled them to call on individuals as and when required. Building relationships assisted the social actors not only to achieve their tasks but, also, as a by-product, resulted in gaining 'extra effort' from those, with whom they interacted. Such interactions were, perhaps, with other social actors doing more than their formal roles because they liked and possibly trusted them in seeking information or assistance with a task. Building and maintaining relationships appeared central to the majority of social actors. They actively worked on these relationships, establishing common ground and breaking down the barriers, caused by their formal roles, to complete tasks and find out what was going on. However, if this did not work, they could use, also, their formal roles and the associated power to complete tasks and find out what they needed to know. The latter course might not derive this 'extra effort' from individuals. This process of creating contacts opened up thinking about manipulation and using people through the conscious manufacturing of relationships. Therefore, it appeared that people, themselves, were considered as tools within the production, conduits to finding things out and getting things done. The social actor would select from their connections the appropriate person to help resolve the problem. These informal networks could equate to ad-hoc side shows, relevant to the overall performance but unscripted and played out depending on the availability of actors, like theatre of times gone by. This crafting and maintenance could be considered as manipulating people. On the face of it, this seems quite cold and hard.

It could be said that both the male and female social actors within the performance had an awareness of the blurring of their personal and professional boundaries. The costs of interacting within the organisation should not have outweighed the benefits. It appeared that social actors could be flexible and adaptable until either this impinged on their family lives and had to stop or their family lives changed. (For example, they became married and/or had a family, which restricted their ability to be flexible and adaptable or they suffered with marital problems as a result of over commitment at work). This indicated there was a definite blurring of boundaries and that interactions within the professional role seeped into their personal roles and vice versa. However, it was rare for this to be acknowledged formally, and a 'work, life balance' seemed to be a thing of fiction. Nevertheless, there was a question about how much of this was personal choice since, perhaps, individuals were motivated to make themselves available in order to succeed and possibly progress.

Knowledge and communication		Agent	Act	Scene	Agency	Purpose
Knowledge of the production - being in the know		Jack and Kenneth were on the periphery, Pete and Martin were backstage.	Impact of change depending on where you physically and structurally sit.	All face-to-face sessions and observations were carried out prior to the final organisational transformation, the last act of change, all took place in the Scottish head office.	Symbols: Language expressing understanding of change and how this impacts social actors.	Knowledge of whole production, experience of being part of the show, knowing how to play not only the formal role but your informal role – not all people know there is a game to be played or are equipped to play it.
		Barbara, Patricia, Rick, Malcolm and Graham were centre stage.	Knowing how to play the game, i.e. when to be honest.			

Figure twenty four: Knowledge and communication dramatism model

As shown in Figure twenty four over the page, many different mediums were used to formally communicate with social actors. Communicating key messages was important for the overall production as well as enabling social actors to communicate with the directors of the production, by feeding in their ideas for improvement. Formally, there were mechanisms within the organisation to inform all social actors about current developments and provide them with the opportunity to feed back their ideas on the changes and suggest improvements. All social actors were provided with the basic knowledge required for their role. However, the social actors concerned themselves with aspects of the productions, which appeared secretive, and what they were not being told about the plot.

All social actors had to learn the language to enable them to participate within the social reality; to establish common ground; and to build trust. The last of these was perceived as an enabler in developing an understanding of the social context. However, as Williams (2006) explained, there was an observed element of competitive intelligence with individuals withholding knowledge, which would be shared with newcomers only when they were accepted as members of the organisation. There was no evidence in the organisational vision of encouraging the sharing of knowledge, which happened on an ad-hoc basis. Tacit knowledge was often kept private by individuals, described by Davenport (1997) as 'competitive weapons'. Therefore, many individuals viewed tacit knowledge as power and something to be hoarded and protected. Perhaps, they were reluctant to share knowledge because, as Szulanski (1996) indicated, they were afraid of losing status and power or possibly, because, as Starbuck (1976) suggested, of self-interest and narrow perspectives. This could be attributed to the perception that individuals would be less valuable if they shared their knowledge (Galliers et al, 2000). They communicated informally with their contacts and relied on them to interpret the plot. This social communication and sharing of knowledge was informal and unscripted. Trying to discover how to play their role and how this fitted in with the other roles could be challenging. There was evidence of informal networks and the social actors would share their knowledge with one another once they had established common ground and trust. In doing so, they created a mechanism, which allowed them to be open and to share experiences as each social actor tried to interpret the reality, which they encountered. My own experience demonstrated that, although this took

time, developing relationships and networks and building trust was a major factor in gaining valuable knowledge. It could be argued that there was a reliance on informal networks and communication because the social actors lacked an understanding of the overall picture; individuals were struggling to put the picture together themselves. When good relationships existed within both personal and professional networks, these equated to good tacit sharing of knowledge, which was a prerequisite in finding out a lot about what was going on within the organisation. If the social actors did not trust someone, they would not share their knowledge. As Von Krogh et al (2000) explained, sharing tacit knowledge required a significant amount of personal and professional trust during the interaction; individuals had to justify their beliefs, which could be an issue because of self-doubt, or fear of going against normal responses.

The social actors had many face to face meetings in carrying out their roles. These appeared quite excessive but could have been because either these meetings, normally, had formal agenda and minutes with each social actor being accountable for their contribution to the discussion or scheduled meetings were the only opportunity for some social actors to interact with each other. Similarly, there were many email communications, which provided a record of interactions and agreements. Social actors appeared to spend the majority of their time participating in formal meetings, leaving little time to complete the tasks associated with their roles within the production. Being able to participate in all these meetings or mini-performances, often meant them having to take time off the stage or work when the audience had gone home to complete the tasks, for which they were paid. Such scenarios should be taken into account when considering the relationship between social actors' professional and personal roles. Whilst so much time appeared to be spent in formal interactions such as meetings and email communications, the social actors had to collaborate amongst themselves to try and uncover the plot of the production. By doing so, it was an opportunity for those with social competence to discover possible ways to progress their roles or, at a simpler level, a way for them to survive. Also, formal roles indicated broadly with whom the social actors should interact.

What does this tell us?

I have highlighted many fragments of culture, which people interpret and re-interpret to develop their social competence within a culture. In this regard, I found it interesting to consider how some social actors managed not only to survive but, also, to thrive within the changing context.

Those that appeared to exploit the cultural scenario

Those, who were able to exploit the cultural scenario, were more successful in its interpretation and, as such, were able to progress (often quickly) professionally within the organisation. They seemed to carve out their own roles by actively seeking out opportunities, which were available only to them as they were 'in the know' and understood the whole picture. Also, they appeared to be highly visible and were highly regarded, which meant that, often, the work-life balance was weighted more towards their commitment to work as they had to be present and flexible in uncovering and acting on the available opportunities. These directors appeared capable of responding to changes by understanding the cultural scenario and 'knowing how to play the game'. They seemed to have the social competence, the capacity, knowledge and capability in the culture to adapt and to understand the factors related to progressing successfully, normally excelling in their current roles but, also, taking on other roles in addition to their own responsibilities. These directors were not given these informal roles within the cultural scenario but, on gaining sufficient social competence within the culture, they seemed to 'get a feeling' about what they were 'supposed to play'. This was similar to the findings of Czarniawska-Joerges (1992).

This understanding and knowledge of 'the bigger picture' enabled them to detect early warning signs and patterns and be creative in finding new ways of seeing their environments. These led to new possibilities for the organisation but, importantly from the perspective of the individuals, for the directors themselves. They required challenges and the freedom and flexibility to exploit opportunities in order to maintain their interest in the organisation. This group seemed to be more

successful in performing 'double loop learning', questioning their mental models, and understanding normal functions and routines, which enable them to understand the decisions and actions within the organisation. They had 'insider knowledge', which enabled them to develop their skills and embrace changes by capitalise on their informal connections. Consequently, they were able to understand the changes, which were taking place and seek opportunities within this environment. Although this insider knowledge was central, another factor was their ability to suspend value judgements until they had a more comprehensive view of situations. They were capable of self maintenance and renewal and had the appropriate mental strength and processes to deal with the environmental and learning challenges and transform themselves. There was a general sense that everyone had to carve out their own role, in terms of promoted posts, and would not simply be presented with opportunities. Those, who could exploit the cultural scenario, seemed to have an understanding of the vision, 'insider knowledge', and the respect and trust of other key individuals. Trust and relationships were key features within this organisation. Trust played an important part in the transfer of tacit knowledge, which was crucial in finding out what was happening within the organisation and in building networks. On the surface, it seemed that those, who were able to exploit the cultural scenario had norms which promoted change; they were prepared to take risks; had shared the overall vision; were open with others; and had high expectations for action. However, it seemed that they could behave only in this way because they had the knowledge and the 'permission' to do so; they were astute and had high levels of emotional intelligence.

Those that appeared to blunder within the cultural scenario

From my observations during my time in the organisation and from my individual discussions, it appeared that some were either unequipped or had no desire to adapt. There were elements of the above description, which could be attributed, also, to the characteristics of those, who had blundered. Consequently, it begged the question: 'What makes some people exploit situations and some blunder?' It appeared to me to be in part about skills and behaviours and values of individuals being positioned from a mechanistic viewpoint with the organisation, which were seen as a barrier. Those, who were not as able to adapt and exploit social

circumstances were, therefore, unable to cope and often employed defensive routines (Argyris and Schön, 1974). Several individuals were no longer valuable to the organisation since it had changed and they did not possess the necessary skills to take part. Individuals either left the organisation or were left behind in the organisation and were encouraged to move on. Those, who stayed in the organisation, appeared to be able adapt as well as 'the exploiters', viewing things from more of a fixed standpoint. This meant that their behaviours and actions were fairly inflexible and rigid (Morgan (2006), on the organisation as a machine), which could mean that they were locked in the past. (Many spoke about the past, as opposed to the future, because they could not see the future).

Morgan (2006) explained that, when the individual's status quo was threatened, individuals adopted face saving practices to protect themselves from embarrassment or threat. Lacking the tacit toolkit, which would enable them to be flexible to change and respond to it, they did not have the mental strength and processes to deal with the challenges, which they faced. Therefore, they were not as able to perform double loop learning and to embrace change, which often meant that they would blunder by. For example, they were too honest at not knowing or wishing to become involved in opportunities. The normal behaviours, which discouraged change included risk avoidance, ambivalence, group thinking and excessive competition. These were significant factors for many people.

Consequences of surviving and thriving with the social reality

By revealing my perspective on the existence of three themes within the collective social reality, this research uncovered some key areas for consideration which impacted on the social actors at a personal and professional level. As shown in Figure twenty five below, the key areas were:



Figure twenty five: Common elements associated with social actors

This research suggested some perspectives on the exploiters, who appeared more able to thrive than those that appeared *only* to survive. However, surviving in itself was a major achievement for all social actors since interacting within the social reality appeared to have differing consequences for individuals. Therefore, it was interesting to think about the possible consequences of some of the above considerations and reflect on where responsibility for these considerations should

rest. The above highlighted, an undesirable organisation; perhaps a place where few would want to work. However, whilst there were difficult periods, it was not a horrible environment, which was why it was important to present these considerations. How much of what has been portrayed was regarded quite simply as 'just business'; an expression, which I have heard many times throughout my years in industry and academia. Perhaps, the hardest admission for me is that we do use one another, that we are not always trusting, and that we adapt naturally to the everydayness of the organisations of which we are a part. I wonder whether this means that we are bad people or we are quite simply 'only human' and that we should accept this is the way in which we behave and is acceptable as long as we are not causing harm.

The cost of interacting within the social reality was an interesting element to consider. For example, all the social actors within this performance adhered to the formal rules, which governed their roles. Also, they exceeded these often by working longer hours than they were required to do. This was not a formal requirement but was often an expectation. In order to be part of the production, the social actors had to perform until they had fulfilled their roles. As regards its and subsequent blurring of personal and professional roles, it was significant to consider whether there was a restriction on the length of time social actors could be flexible and adaptable. When family roles changed and they became, husbands, wives and possibly parents, it begged the question: does this mean that they can no longer be as versatile within their professional role and if this is the case, what is the cost for their professional role? Several social actors mentioned their personal lives whilst discussing their professional experiences. For some, they seemed to reach a point when they had to step back from what they could offer, perhaps because of their family lives. As someone, who wants to have a successful career and be successful in her personal life by having a husband and family, I was keen to discover if this was achievable or whether something had to give. Ultimately, since the social actors did not leave their personal lives at home when they put on their working clothes, this research 'looked beyond the suit' and considered the whole person. The individuals' personal and professional lives were linked and the boundaries blurred; also, they brought with them their hopes, dreams and aspirations. At the point when social actors were no longer able to fulfil their roles or did not have the

ability to understand the bigger picture, they were struggling to cope. They employed face saving processes to ensure that the audience did not realise that that they did not know their lines within the script. We are human and fragile.

My ethnographic journey

The early days within this research proved very arduous and complex since it was not obvious to me on which fragments of culture I should focus. I had to maintain belief that something would emerge. Therefore, I observed everything, recording thoughts and experiences within my reflective diary, trying to digest what was being learnt and make sense of it. This was unavoidable since it was a process of discovery which I had to go through. The difficult part was remaining confident that something would emerge. Similarly, I spent a great deal of time trying to interpret what I had gathered, trying to fit the huge amounts of data into a model. I found this frustrating and quite simply did not work. I was trying to take my new ways of thinking and observations and fit them into an old way of presenting and analysing. This was a challenging time and as it was not immediately obvious to me why this approach was not working.

Ethnography was central to this research. However, this was a new approach, one which acknowledged my role in the research. This was difficult at many different levels. Putting myself in the research made me feel vulnerable and exposed; not able to protect myself behind writing in third person; I was writing as myself. I was trying to make sense of how social actors made sense of themselves whilst making my own journey of self discovery in the same world. As Rosen (1991) said, ethnographers study others to find out more about themselves. I did not expect to be such a big part of this when I initiated this research. This was something that I struggled with until my confidence and experience grew. Keeping a reflexive account of my experiences was central to this research. The diary recorded seemingly unimportant events, tracking my history and in terms of trustworthiness and validity this reflexive account was crucial to this research. It was an honest, open account of my experiences, guarding me against making premature assumptions about what was happening. As Schuktze (2000) commented, it also

tracked evolving concepts and ideas, showing that the 'rules' of ethnography were followed. There was no question that this was an arduous journey, filled with many high and low points; the reflective diary was testimony to this. This diary had many functions, one of which was a source of therapy, highlighting my challenges and almost talking myself through them as I wrote – it was invaluable.

The time – almost three years – which I spent in the organisation was significant. Reflecting on my experiences in the organisation, I loved the majority of it and have had no experience like it since. It was full on, all-consuming at times. There were many low points, too, but there was something about the organisation, which motivated me professionally and personally to keep going back until I had an understanding of what was happening. The aftermath was something worth discussing as I felt mentally and emotionally exhausted for several reasons. The first was very personal in that I struggled at being made redundant and having the choice of leaving the organisation taken away from me. There was always tension around the different roles, which I had within this research, often those between researcher, employee, friend and confidant were blurred. I had underestimated how exhausting juggling multiple roles would be. Having many roles was certainly achievable; the majority of us play more than one role. However, intellectually switching from these different roles was draining in the end. I did not appreciate all of this until I had written up the majority of my work. Again, this was all captured in the reflective diary, which still made it quite so difficult for me to read and why I believed that was of utmost importance that I protected individuals in organisations from harm when presenting this research.

It was approximately eight months after I departed from the organisation that I was able to start making sense of what I had experienced. This was no quick fix. During my time within the organisation, another PhD researcher had come into the organisation. He distributed a questionnaire, interviewed some individuals and left again; this approach would not have worked in this research. I had to be immersed, almost drowning in the cultural scenario, to then be able to reflect and interpret. I do not believe that I could have gained as much insight by doing this research in any other way. As Wolcott (1999) said, I needed a way of making observations, giving

insight into what was normally invisible. This was provided by ethnography. I always had awareness of protecting people from harm, which was why it was essential that neither the organisation was named, nor the people, who participated within the organisation. As interpretive research, objectivity was not possible because the social realities were constructed both socially and between subjects and knowledge, which was based on personal and collective prior knowledge. I co-generated knowledge in an interactive way within the observations and interviews, interpretations of interpretations (Geertz, 1973). This research was authentic in that it was fair in considering the viewpoints of a group of employees within an organisation. Representing the multiple truths was a key concern throughout the write up stage, which is why I agonised so much over how to present and interpret what I had gathered. I wanted to ensure that I was able to present an interpretation of my experiences and of those with which I interacted. Trust was imperative as people shared not only professional experiences but, also, some very personal ones. I very much saw my role as protecting their identities, preserving their stories and interpreting them through a new lens for you to view.

Limitations of the research

There was no denying that this organisation was fast paced and, during the final year, it underwent a massive change programme which, ultimately, saw it taken over by another organisation. This was a significant period of uncertainty for many employees. When it came to organising the narrative interviews, I became aware that I had to organise them quickly to ensure they were all carried out in as close proximity as possible to each other. This was necessary because the predicted major change was due to come into effect and I could not be sure on its impact on the individuals, to whom I was speaking, or even that they would survive the change programme. On a practical level, this was very demanding as I had to juggle diaries. It was commonplace to have more than one interview in a day, which involved recording my thoughts prior to the interview and immediately afterwards. Obviously, I found participating in the interviews fairly exhausting.

At the beginning of this research, my intention was to hold group sessions with the individuals to whom I had spoken individually. However, I became aware immediately that this would never happen. Security and confidentiality were such key concerns for individuals that, simply, they would have been uncomfortable having the types of conversations, which we shared individually, in a group setting. This was unfortunate since it would have been useful to gain perspectives of their realities collectively.

Originality

The aim of this research is to encourage individuals to look at things with fresh perspectives; it is not offering a solution to organisations. I have demonstrated in this research that there has been a significant shift in my understanding of organisations. I have moved from focusing on finding ways of supporting organisations, which survive and thrive, to a perspective, which considered how the organisations should support their individuals to enable them to survive and thrive. Organisations are collections of people and not living beings as I had thought previously.

This work is original in that it presents the notion of cultural exploiters and blunderers. It augments the existing literature and takes it a step further. My presentations of complex concepts, which are shown in Figures, are original in the way in which these synthesise information. The research process is highly transparent in this work. It has great integrity as I wanted to 'do justice' to people stories and experiences.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

This research started off with a problem; I was unable to decipher how an organisation 'worked', which meant that I was unable to understand how and why individuals behaved in certain ways – the cultural scenario. This prevented me from knowing how to behave appropriately in my professional role. My observations and a deep interest in senior level employees made me question their understanding of the cultural scenario; I wanted to understand more about their cultural competence. Therefore, this research sought to understand:

- How some individuals were able to survive within the organisation;
- Why some individuals were able to not only survive, but thrive; and
- What the consequences for individuals were as a result of interacting within the organisational world.

This was achieved by:

- Observing and interacting within the social reality for almost three years to reveal the cultural clues of the director level employees' collective social realities.
- Using a questionnaire to gather background information on the director level employees in order to gain an initial understanding of their perspectives of the social realities. I carried out eleven in-depth narrative interviews in order to discuss interpretations of the social reality.
- Developing a theatrical mechanism of presenting the tangible, explicit aspects as well as the intangible, tacit elements of the culture. This was presented as a dramatic model of human behaviour as a means of analysing the cultural clues, which emerged.

Surviving and thriving in the organisational world

The individuals, who were part of the cultural scenario, were faced with complex situations and frequent changes and some felt quite overwhelmed by them. As Ling (2003) stated, individuals in these situations might blame themselves for being unable to understand situations when, in fact, they were in positions with which they were not equipped to cope. People are more than just their job. Individuals adapt naturally to the everydayness of being part of the social phenomenon. They bring their hopes, dreams and aspirations to work. Some struggled to cope and survive in changing contexts. There was a feeling that people had a period of 'usefulness', a shelf life. By interacting within this phenomenon, there was often a cost, which impacted on personal lives. Therefore, it was evident that there was a blurring of personal and professional boundaries. There was an acknowledgement that people use one another, to assist in the navigation through the cultural scenario. Those, who struggled to cope, often employed face saving routines. Many saw knowledge as a competitive weapon, which was shared only when trust and/or common purpose was established. Individuals did not always trust each other and some could be classed as cynical manipulators who recognised the power of tacit knowledge.

There was a game to be played. Culture could be considered as a script, in which individuals created and recreated everyday communications as they went about the business of living. All had formal job roles but how they carried them out was unscripted and allowed for improvisation. For example, there was informal and unscripted social communication and sharing of knowledge between individuals although this was crafted often through networking with colleagues. Their personalities and experiences determined how they interpreted their roles. People within the organisation actively established their own support networks, which provided them with information, knowledge and support. They created, managed and gained experience from these networks, which were often outside their day to day jobs.

This research acknowledged the cultural scenario and discovered that some individuals were able to exploit social processes, relationships and communications. However, others were not equipped to do so, as they appeared to lack the necessary understanding of the cultural scenario to enable them to understand and exploit the available opportunities. The patterns, revealed in this research, signalled the existence of two types of behaviours; those, who were able to exploit the cultural scenario, and those, who blundered. This is summarised in Figure twenty seven below:

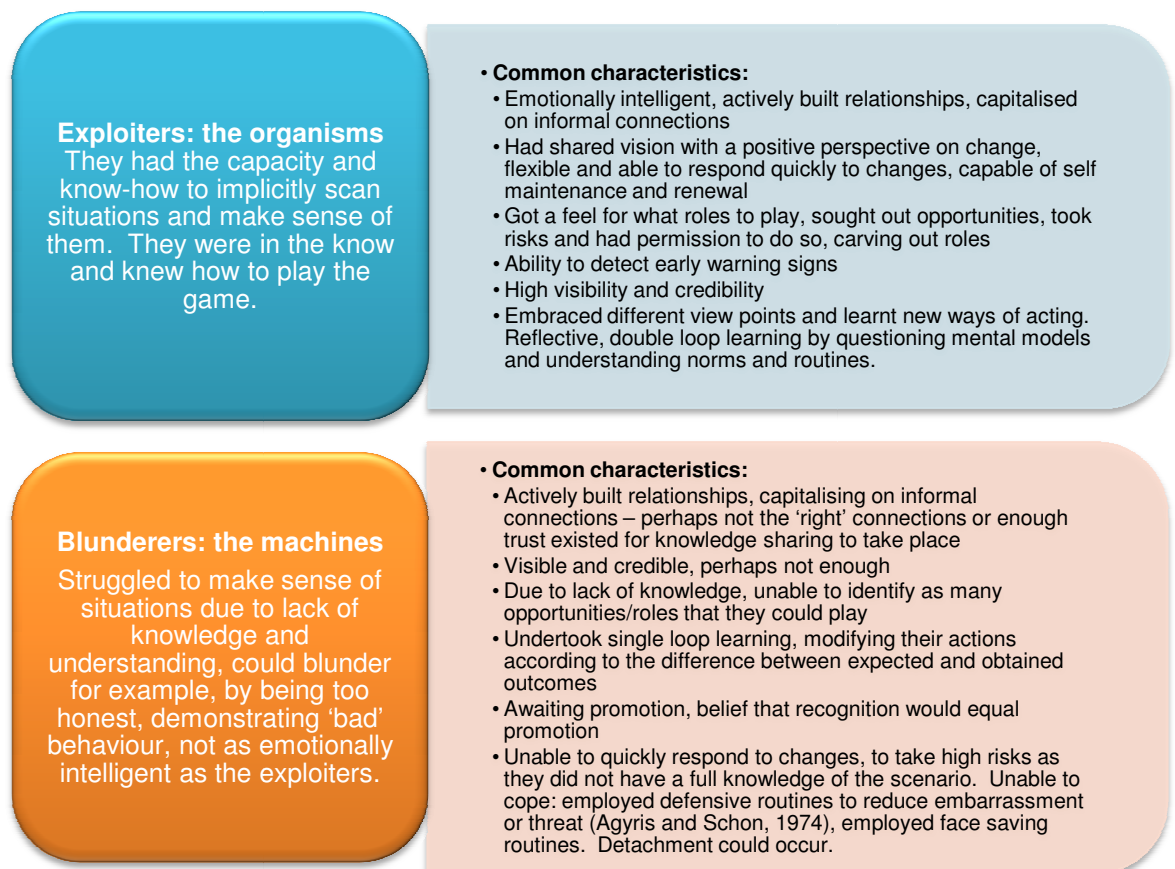


Figure twenty six: Exploiters: 'the organisms' and Blunderers: 'the machines'

Some individuals implicitly scanned situations to make sense of them, 'reading' the cultural scenario, which enabled them to embrace different points of view and learn

new ways of acting. It could be argued that it was not a level playing field since some individuals did not have the cognitive or practical skills or insider knowledge to exploit change and to identify opportunities. In this regard, individuals had to be assisted in developing cognitive and practical skills, which would enable them to work in this frequently changing environment.

Ways of helping individuals to participate

This was a study of organisational reality. It featured multiple individuals, who, in themselves, had multiple roles and, therefore, realities which provided a complex picture when trying to discover how things *really* worked within the organisation. To reveal the hidden, individual, reality construction processes, this research aimed to uncover and explore formal and informal clues (those, which were easily seen and those which were hidden). In many respects, it was easier to uncover the rational aspects of organisational life, such as job descriptions and organisational charts (although these changed frequently). It was more difficult to uncover social constructions since these were more subtle. It was important to bring these to the surface as they revealed the perspectives of individuals. These insights enabled me to understand individuals' motives, and their ways of acting, which enabled them to participate within the cultural scenario. Therefore, the aim of this research was to shed light on the multiple cultural realities within an organisation and to provide perspectives on how individuals made sense of this social world, which enabled them to participate in the complex phenomenon.

As a researcher and employee, to enable me to see the visible and cognitive aspects of culture, metaphors were important as they assisted me in seeing one thing in terms of another. The culture metaphor (Turner 1971, Pondy and Mitroff, 1979, Pettigrew, 1979, Louis, 1980, Whorton and Worthley, 1981) and the iceberg metaphor (French and Bell, 1982) proved invaluable in enabling double visioning. As (Boje, 2001) explained, this was a way of seeing the formal and informal structures and processes, roles and knowledge and communication, which were perceived within the cultural scenario. Symbols played a key role in gaining an understanding of the way in which people perceived purpose and meaning.

Symbols helped to decipher the assumptions, which guided people's behaviours on who did what and for what reason, the motives underlying their actions. Ethnography provided ways of deciphering what I was seeing and hearing (Van Maanen, 1979; Rosen, 1991; Bate, 1997; Smith, 2000; Barley and Kunda, 2001); and narrative enabled me to understand and interpret my observations and interactions (Boje, 1995; Gabriel, 1995; Czarniawska, 1998). The theatre metaphor (Goffman, 1959) offered a way of presenting what could not be easily articulated and a way of demonstrating the verbal and non verbal aspects of what was observed and discussed. The dramatism model (Burke, 1945, 1969) offered a way of describing theatrically the human behaviour, which had been presented.

It was not until I had concluded this reflective ethnographic research that I pondered, as a way of understanding and behaving within a cultural scenario, the idea of everyone in organisations being reflexive ethnographers. Ethnography enabled me to make sense of everyday interactions, giving insight into aspects which would have been undetectable. As Lundy and Cowling (1996) described, such things were deeply seated, subconscious values and beliefs. I was able to develop a general vocabulary to discuss everyday realities; I had to look beyond what each individual was saying to interpret the multiple realities of the people with whom I was interacting. The metaphors, theories, and frames through which I scanned implicitly the situations, which I was trying to understand, acted as a kind of radar or homing device, which drew my attention towards key features of a situation.

As Morgan (2006) stated, individuals have to become skilled in the art of ‘reading’ the situations, which they are attempting to organise and manage. This is an intuitive process, which is learned through experience, reading and rereading situations almost subconsciously, and enables the individuals to understand and transform the situations, which they encounter. People interpreted and reinterpreted their understanding of fragments of culture and modified their behaviour and, as a result, which is why some individuals blundered (as they did not understand what was going on) and some were able to exploit within the cultural scenario. In order to see and understand fragments of culture, individuals require competencies or a cultural toolkit, which enables them to continually uncover and understand what is going on by:

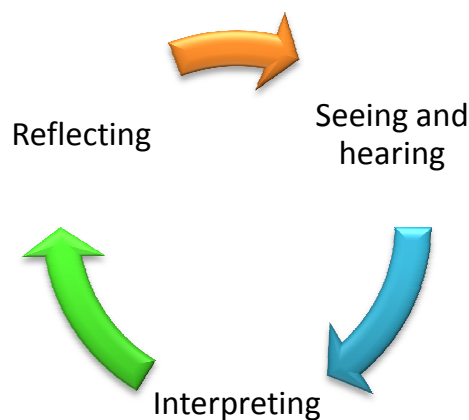


Figure twenty six: Ways of understanding the cultural scenario

This enables them to decipher organisational life and gain cultural competence. Lessons can be learned from the characteristics identified and associated with the ‘blunderers’ and ‘exploiters’, for example, the requirement for awareness of strengths and weaknesses, ability to build networks, and the requirement for emotional intelligence. I experienced three phases within this organisation – work experience, new member of staff, and experienced member of staff. These phases meant that I developed my own cultural toolkit. This research demonstrated that individuals created their own structures and processes to enable them to participate in the social reality but concluded that some required support to do so.

Whitehead (1929) believed that, as individuals, we needed to be more aware of social experiences, 'to live, to live well, to live better'. My view of the world has been influenced by my life experiences. As a child, I was guided by my mother, who is a moral figure and continues to guide me in my adult life. It was not until I reached my late twenties that I realised how much of an influence that she had had on me and how, in turn, my morals affected my decision making process. As a lecturer, I was very aware, always, of how my students perceived me and my impact on their learning experiences. This was based on my positive and negative experiences as a student throughout my formal education and their subsequent impact on my learning. As an employee, there was a gap; there was little guiding, shaping, nurturing, educating and, in some cases, caring, unless I had a 'good manager'. Consequently, it was a highly personal experience and dependent upon luck whether or not I had a good manager.

Management within organisations should adhere to a more holistic approach of supporting individuals. Weick (1969) described how there should be now more of a focus on processes rather than structures, organising rather than organisations. The role of management must change from structuring tasks to shaping behaviour. Therefore, there is a requirement for a people centred management style, which requires a change in business models. There is a need for less bureaucracy, more informal communications, and new ways of exploring and understanding organisations. Just as I was supported when I was a child and then a student, individuals within organisations need to be supported. Managers should strive to ensure that individuals' talents are used fully. There is a need for two way communications leading to more consensus and integration rather than using divide and rule (Follett, 1868-1933). Managers should be 'quiet managers' (Mintzberg, 1999), empowering, inspiring and caring about colleagues. This would lend itself to the complex social phenomena of which we now find ourselves a part.

What are the key messages within this research, and who are they for?

This research provides an understanding of methods of uncovering cognitive aspects of complex social phenomena and ways of considering motives underlying actions. These impacted on people's behaviours and suggested ways of supporting individuals to survive and, perhaps, thrive in these challenging scenarios. It provides an analysis of informal relations within an organisation to promote an understanding of the dynamics of social groupings. This understanding provides information on improving life in the working environment and contributing to our knowledge of organisational life. Generally, to do so, we need to understand the dynamics of human groupings, which may ultimately lead to improving life in the working environment. It reveals to other researchers and wider public, the details of practices known merely to their practitioners. This major part of social life seems quite opaque to the majority of participants.

This research raises questions about how difficult it can be to categorise very complicated knowledge. By looking at how things have been put together rather than the overall pattern, we are able to look at the same bits of glass but see different patterns just like in a kaleidoscope. Patterns cannot be made to happen without first going through the process. I am unable to predict that this would happen in another organisation. However, there are bits of the mosaic, which fit together. Consequently, I believe thoughts will be informed best by looking at the all the bits of the mosaic and not just the final pattern. This work is relevant to many individuals and, as such, can be communicated easily to people, who can relate it to their own experiences in their everyday working lives. Therefore, the findings are relevant to individuals within other organisations, regardless of sector. These findings can form the basis of a 'survival guide' or 'cultural toolkit' for employees to help them to be aware of the subtle workings of organisations. It is, also, relevant to human resources personnel, strategists, managers, educators and those working in organisational development – all roles that need to consider how individuals behave within organisations.

In summary, by acknowledging the existence of the cultural scenario and by revealing the characteristics of those, who blunder and those who can exploit this, individuals have to be encouraged to see the cognitive and visible aspects of culture, which exist within the structures and processes, roles and the knowledge and communication that exists within organisations. To do this, they require the following support:

1. The role of management needs to move from 'managing' in the traditional sense, to 'guiding', and;
2. This guidance will assist individuals in developing their own cultural toolkit, which should enable them to discover, by seeing and hearing, interpreting and reflecting, to enable them to participate within the cultural scenario.

Appendice 1 – ‘Facesheet’

Background	
Job title:	Account Director
Responsibilities:	[an account]
Which area of the business/function do you work in?	[a business function]
Length of service	
Which companies have you worked for over the past five years?	n/a
Which sectors have you worked in over the past five years?	

Organisational structure	
Would you describe the business as (please tick):	Competitive
Do you think the organisational structure is (please tick):	Structured into functions/departments
Do you interact socially with employees from across the business?	Usually
Do you collaborate with others in the business?	Usually

Behaviours	
Are you spontaneous?	Usually
Are you experimental?	Usually
Do you speak freely?	Usually

Leadership	
Are you an open communicator>?	Sometimes
Do you embrace risk?	Sometimes
Do you manage by example?	Usually

Sharing/acquiring knowledge	
Do you share ideas or hunches?	Usually
Do you share processes?	Usually
Do you ask the following people when looking for/sharing	Looking for information

information (please tick): Superiors	
Do you ask the following people when looking for/sharing information (please tick): Peers	Looking for information;Sharing information
Do you ask the following people when looking for/sharing information (please tick): Work friends	Looking for information;Sharing information
Do you ask the following people when looking for/sharing information (please tick): Customers	Looking for information
Do you ask the following people when looking for/sharing information (please tick): Friends in other organisations	Looking for information
Do you find out/share information, do you use the following methods (please tick): Telephone	Looking for information;Sharing information
Do you find out/share information, do you use the following methods (please tick): Email	Looking for information;Sharing information
Do you find out/share information, do you use the following methods (please tick): Online communities	No
When looking for/sharing information do you use any of the following (please tick): [intranet]	Looking for information
When looking for/sharing information do you use any of the following (please tick): Operating procedures	Looking for information;Sharing information
When looking for/sharing information do you use any of the following (please tick): Intranet	Looking for information
When looking for/sharing information do you use any of the following (please tick): Journals	Looking for information
When looking for/sharing information do you use any of the following (please tick): Websites	Looking for information

Applying knowledge	
Doing your job, do you rely upon : Intuition	Sometimes
Doing your job, do you rely upon : Past experience	Usually
Doing your job, do you rely upon : Gut feeling	Sometimes
Doing your job, do you rely upon : Judgement calls	Sometimes
Learning	

Do you learn from :[internally] run courses	Sometimes
Do you learn from :Externally run courses	Usually
Do you learn from :On the job coaching	Rarely
Do you learn from :Working with your team	Usually
Do you learn from :Collaborating with others in the business	Usually
Do you learn from :Past experiences	Usually
Do you learn from :Completing new tasks	Usually
What academic and/or professional qualifications do you have?	[technical degrees]
Do you have any corporate affiliations or memberships?	[technical affiliation]

Appendice 2 - Pre interview sheet

Interviewee: social actor x **Date and time:** 2.8.07 – 9.05am

Location: Main office

General comments (feelings, emotions):

Very tired this morning which is making it fairly difficult for me to be enthusiastic. I am really looking forward to the interview (I shouldn't say that, as when I do things go wrong!). However, I fear my tiredness may interfere with my questioning and opportunity to follow up on key points.

I am anxious about this interview as I know this gentleman; in fact he was one of the people, which spurred on this research. For a vast amount of time it would be fair to say that I disliked and he made me feel like I knew nothing. However, this relationship has changed, perhaps, because I have proved my worth and he realises that without my input the success of one of his projects would be in jeopardy.

However, that said, he likes to poke fun and I fully expect him to try and turn this interview around on me and for him to start asking me questions, but so long as I am prepared for that it should be okay.

I am genuinely interested in what he has to say. Before asking him to interview I was warned that he may have an agenda and I am aware that he is probably considered one of the 'old school' employees, the ones which the business have been 'getting rid of' recently. Therefore, I am unsure if he will be truthful or whether he will come in with a game plan, I guess that I will find out soon enough.

Two real interviews – two real problems.

Yesterday's interview was half an hour late and now today's is half an hour late and looking like it is not going to take place at all. I heard a rumour that there is [a major

business change] taking place today. Therefore I am guessing that all of the people of importance will be involved in this in some way or another. I have called and left a voicemail; however, thus far, there is no response.

It's now quarter past ten and still no response. I am trying not to be negative as I know that ordinarily these are busy people. However, with a big issue arising this morning, they are probably even busier but I am a big believer in common courtesy. How long exactly does it take to make a phone call? Is this part of the problem that they lose grasp of reality and think that the simple things like manners are no longer applicable – who knows!

An hour later, I received a phone call to say he had been held up at the doctors and that he would be straight over – twenty minutes later, he materialised!

Appendice 3 - Post interview sheet

General comments:	
The interviewee (talkative, cooperative, nervous, appearance)	He was quite hesitant at times, quite quiet, a little impatient at times.
The location (busy/quiet, many/few people)	Glass room but this wasn't a distraction.
Other avenues of interest discovered?	<p>I spoke about looking at the person behind the role and I don't think that I had truly uncovered that was what I was looking at. The informal element of the organisation, which looks at the person and not the role, not the hierarchy, not the mission statement etc.</p> <p>He spoke about the business being in silos and running each contract independent of one another. When I suggested that they ran contracts as 'mini businesses', he agreed.</p> <p>We, also, discussed the [old organisation] and those that belonged to it and the differences in management style. It appeared to be a case of 'who you knew' as opposed to 'what you know' and he thinks that the business isn't like that anymore.</p>
General feel about what was uncovered	<p>That was so funny, I feel as if I have just had a bonding session with a guy that I used to really dislike! I was over my ill feelings for him; in fact I had got to the stage where I quite liked him.</p> <p>This research was triggered by</p>

	<p>interactions with this director and a few others. I felt that by letting him know that, he would be more open and I think that he was to a certain extent. Although I am aware that he is, also, looking to progress further within the organisation and was not willing to discuss that further.</p> <p>I spoke a lot about me as a person and him as a person and I don't know whether it was right or wrong to speak personally about myself but it was the only way that I knew of to get him to relate to me and understand what I was saying. He always asks why you ask certain questions and what you are trying to achieve from it as he always appears to need a true understanding of a situation and I have noticed that he is like that in work situations as well. I had to go into detail about my intentions but I half expected that to be honest. He didn't rubbish it completely, although he did say behavioural work is taking place within the (training centre). Then I had to explain that this was only one aspect and that it was a cultural study.</p> <p>Personality has hindered him in his career and it appears that you have to toe the line. I suggested that you had to play the game and he agreed and has learned from his experiences and</p>
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	<p>as he said, he has taken on board the feedback. He believes that he has not been promoted because of how he was perceived by others. This seems to be important, you need to be viewed in a certain way in order to progress. He has learned the rules now and appears to making moves upwards.</p> <p>He believes that age has changed him as a person in that he has mellowed more than his early days. He is the type of character, who reminds me a lot of myself, hot headed, aggressive and does not suffer fools gladly. Yet, he gave an example of his first contract when he joined the [old organisation]. I found it very interesting that he then spoke about the client on the contract and how he perceived them. He said that they were very difficult to work with and were almost sharks. I cannot remember exactly how he described them but I remember thinking at the time – that was my perception of you so isn't it odd that this was your perception of them and you really disliked them!</p> <p>We spoke for five minutes after the interview again about our working relationship and it was open and honest, maybe too honest! I have learned loads from it though and that was the point that I was trying to make.</p>
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	It was so useful indeed because without that experience I wouldn't have learned how to 'play the game'.
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